DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 777 TE 001 653

TITLE	Improvisation and the Teaching of Literature: The Proceedings of a Symposium.
INSTITUTION	Central Midwestern Regional Educational Lab., St. Ann, Mo.
PUB DATE	Aug 69
NOTE	77p.; Supplement Number One to CEMREL's Summary Report on the 1968-69 Season of the Educational Laboratory Project (ED 032 307)
AVAILABLE FROM	Verna Smith, Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory, 10646 St. Charles Rock Road, St. Ann, Missouri 63074 (free)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.50 HC-$3.95
DESCRIPTORS	Behavioral Objectives, Cognitive Objectives, *Creative Dramatics, Discovery Learning, *Dramatic Play, *English Instruction, Enrichment Activities, Group Instruction, Learning Activities, *Literature Appreciation, Role Playing, *Sensitivity Training, Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

This report comprises transcripts of tape recordings of (1) a short improvisation session conducted by a drama coach and (2) the subsequent seminar (edited) in which the 28 participants explore the relationship of improvisation to teaching literature. Topics discussed are the objectives of literature instruction, emotional experience as an integral part of the learning process, how to employ the "game" to accomplish the "task," and whether improvisation is a valuable enough experience to justify teaching it for itself alone. Participants relate experiences which show that students enjoy such improvisational activities as role-playing, and in the process develop self-confidence and sensitivity to themselves and sometimes to literature. Geoffrey Summerfield outlines the uses of drama in British schools, and Robert F. Hogan indicates the potential of improvisation for developing students' power over their language and for stimulating imaginative involvement with literature. An introduction outlines the purposes of the symposium, offers several definitions of improvisation, and describes the improvisations that took place during the 2-day workshop. (RH)

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ED034777

IMPROVISATION AND THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE: THE PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM

August, 1969

SUPPLEMENT NUMBER ONE
to CEMREL's Summary Report on
the 1968-69 Season of the Educational
Laboratory Theatre Project

TE 001 653

Published by the Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc. (CEMREL), a private, non-profit corporation supported in part as a regional laboratory by funds from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the Office of Education should be inferred.

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PREFATORY NOTE

Improvisation and the Teaching of Literature is one of several volumes supplemental to The Educational Laboratory Theatre Project, A Report on Its Operations, 1968-1969 (St. Louis: CEMREL, Inc., August, 1969). The supplemental volumes contain materials too bulky to be included in the basic report and/or materials of interest to special or limited audiences.

Not only the size of the present report but its nature suggested separate publication. Many of the people involved in the Theatre Project, it seemed to us, would not be especially interested in a symposium on improvisation; while other people--English teachers, English curriculum specialists, and so on--might be interested in the symposium proceedings although little concerned with the Theatre Project itself.

Copies of this supplement, therefore, are being sent to a number of educators for whom we think it might have some value. Additional copies are available from CEMREL's Public Information Officer, Mrs. Verna Smith.

INTRODUCTION

by James Hoetker

The Facts

On January 23 and 24, 1969, CEMREL sponsored a symposium at which representatives of diverse disciplines met to discuss the potential applicability to the teaching of language and literature of improvisational methods developed originally to train actors for the theatre.

CEMREL's involvement in planning and sponsoring this symposium came about this way. Miss Shirley Trusty, the Educational Supervisor of the Educational Laboratory Theatre Project in New Orleans, during the 1967-68 season, had begun experimenting with improvisation as an adjunct to the Project, especially as a way to acquaint English teachers with the essentials of drama so that they might become more flexible in preparing their students for the plays they were to see.

Various experts in mime and improvisation had been brought to New Orleans to give demonstrations and workshops for teachers and drama students. Among these were Mr. Robert Alexander and Mr. Norman Gevanthor, both of whom work in the Children's Theatre of the Arena Stage in Washington and with schools in the District of Columbia. Miss Trusty arranged for Alexander and Gevanthor to conduct an intensive one week workshop for twenty-five New Orleans area English teachers early in the summer of 1968. She asked CEMREL to conduct a study of the teachers participating in the workshop, so as to determine the workshop's effects upon the teachers, their students, and their schools. As the first step in this study, I attended and participated in the first days of the workshop. During this time, the idea came up in conversations between Miss Trusty, Alexander, Gevanthor, and me that it might be a worthwhile extension of CEMREL's research on the Project to sponsor a meeting of various outstanding people who were working with improvisation and theatre games, so as to spread the word of otherwise uncommunicated new discoveries and improvements of technique. This seemed rather far removed from the charge that had been given CEMREL, to assess the impact of the Theatre Project, but, as the conversations continued, the original idea was altered in a direction that made it clearly relevant to the educational concerns of the Project, potentially productive of researchable hypotheses concerning the most effective way to deal with theatre in the classroom context, and possibly conducing to a better understanding of the role of dramatic activities in education.

By August 1968, agreement had been reached, in general terms, about the agenda of the meeting and the types of people to be invited. The symposium became an item in CEMREL's 1968-69 work statement and budget. It was agreed that about twenty-four participants would take part, including representatives of both the schools and theatres in all three Project sites. Participants were to be selected from lists of names submitted by CEMREL and Miss Trusty. Other observers would be invited. The dates of the conference were chosen to coincide with the presence in New Orleans of Miss Viola Spolin, the originator of a great many of the techniques used in improvisational work, who had already been contracted to conduct a series of workshops for students and teachers.

In early October an announcement of the Symposium was sent to those persons who had been identified as potentially valuable participants. The announcement read, in part,

> The symposium will provide an occasion for approximately twenty-four people, representing professional and educational theatre, teacher education, school administration, the behavioral sciences, and various levels of the English teaching profession, to meet in a seminar-like atmosphere to discuss the implications for English education of improvisational techniques developed originally as a means for training actors....
>
> An integral part of the business of the conference will be the observation of improvisational techniques in action. A few of the participants will be asked to present papers on such topics as the relationships between improvisation and other group training techniques, the uses of improvisation in attaining the goals of literature instruction, and the philosophical or psychological assumptions underlying improvisational methods. But the emphasis will be upon the exchange of ideas among representatives of different viewpoints and interests, with the papers serving the purposes of orienting the discussion.

> Although conclusions that may be reached in a two day conference on a relatively unexplored topic must necessarily be tentative, it is hoped that among the outcomes of the conference will be some clear statements of position and some careful analyses of the educational ramifications of the adoption of improvisational techniques.
> It is anticipated that a report of the proceedings of the symposium will be made available to English teachers and others interested in the subject, and that propositions generated at the conference will become hypotheses in subsequent research studies.

Both the subject and the location apparently having wide appeal, almost everyone invited immediately accepted and arrangements for the Symposium were completed. In addition to invited participants, other members of the CEMREL staff, representatives of the Arts in Education program in University City, Missouri, and a number of New Orleans area English and Speech teachers attended the symposium as observers.

What is Improvisation?

Before setting out to describe what happened during the New Orleans Symposium, some attention should be given to defining what it was about. The term "improvisation" has many meanings and different authorities use it in different ways. Improvisation may be a discipline in itself; it may be a component of an educational approach (e.g., as it is used in Creative Dramatics or the Stanislavsky "method"); it may be part of a psychotherapeutic strategy (e.g., as it is used in psychodrama); it may be part of the group interaction in sensitivity training; it may be a method by which a group of actors create dramatic scenes or even entire plays.

Basically, however, improvisation is spontaneously expressing and giving form to inner impulses or remembered feelings, with the emphasis being upon the body as the medium of expression. The impromptu scenes that are improvised in any of the above cases are (1) indirectively motivated by a coach or director, (2) controlled to some degree by the director while in process, and (3) discussed and criticized (usually in a non-judgmental fashion) by the director or the group.

Most advocates of improvisation and techniques related to it seem to share a Rousseauvian conception of human nature, attributing most human troubles to the blocking or inhibition of natural impulses by fear or custom, and trusting to the wisdom of intuitive perceptions and the moral healthiness of spontaneous impulses. They share the belief that play or game-like activities, of which improvisation is one sort, can free people to act more honestly, to perceive more freshly, to relate more humanely to other people, and to learn more meaningfully and easily.

Some advocates of improvisation seem to think of their techniques as constituting a direct solution to the problems of social disorder and mental illness. Others just as firmly reject any claims that improvisation is either a sort of lay psychotherapy or a pedagogical method, insisting it is basically an aesthetic matter, an art form in its own right that, like any other art, opens new dimensions of experience and expression to those who participate in it. Still others see improvisation as an efficient technique for social, personal, and academic learning, efficient because it uses the natural reinforcers inherent in any play situation and because it involves the whole organism in the learning process.

All three of these points of view were represented at the symposium. Bob Alexander most clearly represented the first point of view. "We are not talking about diffusing our creativity into the students," he insisted early in the symposium,

> we're talking about releasing the creativity that already exists....All we have to do is encourage, encourage, encourage them to get in contact with their creativity, with their deep life source to revere it. And once you revere your own creativity and your own life source, you revere everything that's living. Once you revere everything that's living, you don't hate. To be prejudiced means to be out of contact; to be in contact means you cannot be prejudiced....Once you understand that the human being is beautiful because he is alive, and that everything that is alive is beautiful, then we are talking about what I think we mean by Paradise.

Wally Smith, in the remarks quoted later, represented the second position, condemning attempts to make improvisation into either a demi-religion or a mere set of tricks for teaching academic subject matter. Eli Bower, a psychologist who has worked intensively with improvisational techniques, is one of several representatives of the third point of view. And Geoffrey Summerfield perhaps best represented an attractively eclectic and very practical point of view; his use of the rather more neutral word "drama" to refer to the phenomenon in question allowed him to avoid doctrinal squabbles.

Within the symposium, there were teachers of English who subscribed to each of these conceptions of improvisation, and there were other participants who kept trying to bring the discussion down to the level of institutional realities or up to the level of ontological generalizations. In the course of the often heated and sometimes eloquent exchanges among representatives of these different points of view, a great richness of testimony to the efficacy of improvisation emerged, but also there emerged a great list of questions that will have to be answered before anyone can say what is the relevance of improvisation to education in general and to the teaching of literature in particular.

We did not, when we decided to sponsor this symposium, expect to have it produce answers to questions. Its purpose was, indeed, to name the beast, not to tame him; to generate excitement about the issue, not to settle it; to articulate assumptions, not to synthesize them.

Some general agreements did seem to exist, however, by the end of the symposium. No one had any doubts, for instance, that the practitioners of improvisation had in their possession a set of very powerful techniques for touching and changing people. No one disagreed that our schools could be vastly improved by increased attention being paid to the needs and experiences of the children, and by more emphasis upon play, upon simply having fun, upon physical movement and active participation. And no one disagreed that there was an area of commonality between the objectives of the director of improvisations and the objectives of the teacher of literature.

But, beyond this, there was no closure; no one was carried away by either the workshop experiences or the rhetoric, although everyone was undoubtedly enlightened by both. But the symposium was a success beyond its sponsors' expectations, in the sheer quantity of the insightful perceptions, the apt analyses, and the clarifications of issues that it produced. Beyond that assessment, we will let the participants speak for themselves, in the pictures and the text that follows this introduction.

The Proceedings of the Symposium

The first day of the symposium was devoted largely to workshop activities. Although some of the participants, besides those who were professionally involved in improvisational work, were quite familiar both with Viola Spolin's "theatre games" and with Alexander's and Gevanthor's procedures, many of them had previously not been acquainted with improvisation. The first day's workshop experiences were to ensure that each of the participants had a first-hand, experiential knowledge of what improvisation is, and to ensure that the participants would share a set of basic experiences to which they could refer.

The first day's proceedings may be divided into five parts. The entire morning was devoted to workshop exercises involving all of the participants and observers who cared to take part (which was almost everyone). As the participants arrived, they found early arrivers doing warm-up exercises to music. Without further introduction, at the announced starting time, Bob Alexander got everyone on their feet, asked the men to remove their coats and ties and the women to kick off their shoes. Then, with everyone in a large circle, Alexander began to direct the group in a series of warming up exercises that progressively involved each part of the body and were accompanied by random, spontaneous vocal sounds that finally rose to shouts and screams.

The following exercises in Alexander's portion of the morning workshop were intended to increase awareness of one's physical self and of the physical self of others. The most striking and effective of the exercises involved each participant moving backwards, with eyes closed, into the center of the circle until he or she established back-to-back contact with another person. Then the couples "explored" one another's backs; then, with eyes still closed, the couples turned and explored one another's faces and bodies with their hands. Finally, the participants were asked to open their eyes, a complete reversal of the normal course of events in which acquaintance is first made by sight, and only much later, if at all, through the sense of touch.

Norman Gevanthor took over midway through the morning and began with more formal "games"--making "machines" of human parts, communicating emotions and meanings with gibberish, and so on. He then moved (much more quickly than would normally be the case) to improvised scenes. Some of these worked quite well (one is reproduced below), since many of the volunteers for the scenes had considerable experience. One of the scenes, an elaborate one involving a large number of people, simply did not work, however, never developed a form or its own momentum. To the participants, this partial failure was certainly as instructive as the more successful scenes. Especially valuable in this portion of the morning was the demonstration that Mr. Gevanthor gave of the pedagogical technique that Miss Spolin calls "side-coaching"--a way of structuring and focussing an on-going improvisation without interfering with it or imposing the teacher's ideas. (See the scene reproduced later.) This first portion of the day's activities concluded with a short question and answer period.

The second portion of the days program involved the participants being bussed to the Civic Theatre to watch Viola Spolin work with students chosen from among an audience of over a thousand New Orleans high school drama students. The demonstration was an impressive one, which cannot really be described; but its impact was weakened in the eyes of a few observers by the fact that the students obviously had been carefully chosen to represent the best of New Orleans students. ("Kids like those make any teacher look good," one skeptic remarked.) Our own judgment, based on other observations, is that the results would have been essentially the same with a group of students carefully chosen to represent the very worst of students, and the demonstration certainly would have been more convincing if that had been the case. It is, in fact, one of the most remarkable things about improvisation and other dramatic techniques, that they seem to work equally well with all sorts of students.

The third portion of the day's activities were devoted to a discussion by Viola Spolin of her techniques and how they evolved from settlement house games. Miss Spolin talked about a workshop she had just held for school administrative personnel in a school district that was considering introducing improvisation into its curriculum. The discussion also touched upon the relationship of improvisation to sensitivity training and of the differences between her techniques and those that Alexander and Gevanthor had demonstrated, the major difference being in the relatively greater emphasis that the latter put upon imagery and memory, as opposed to immediate sensation.

The fourth portion of the day's activities was devoted to the showing of a segment of a very remarkable kinescope made by the BBC as part of a series exploring the educational uses of improvised drama. Robert Hogan, who had contributed the kinescope, introduced it and briefly discussed it. In the segment of the tape that was shown--in which a large group of non-academic 14-year-olds in the North of England improvised, under the direction of Mrs. Dorothy Heathcote, an elaborate drama on the theme of assassinating the President--one sort of relevance of improvisation to literature was manifestly obvious. The kinescope, therefore, made an excellent lead in to the final portion of the day which was a brainstorming session, conducted by Father Augustine Wilhelmy, who acted as moderator of the symposium, in which the participants raised as many questions as they could think of about the relationship of improvisation and education, especially literary education. The tape of this portion of the meeting was reviewed following the meeting, the questions categorized, and the categories used the following day to structure the session.

The proceeding of the first day of the symposium are reported in the next chapter of this report in a manner which the workshop leaders would approve of. Non-verbally. The pictures (by Dave Boyanchek, of the CEMREL staff) convey better than words can what happened to the participants during the first day, and they also make clear that the term "symposium" to describe this occasion was used advisedly, in the original Platonic sense, for the first day (there was much talk of Love) recalled Agathon's dinner party, though it fell short of Trimalchio's feast.

The second day was much more verbal, although toward the end of the day Norman Gevanthor again took over and involved everyone in an exercise called "the random walk"; he introduced an interesting variation by turning over the coaching of the exercise to a young lady who had only recently been made aware of improvisation.

The transcription of the second day's discussion, the scope of which has already been alluded to, has been through three editing processes. After a verbatim transcription of a tape recording of the entire symposium had been prepared, members of the CEMREL staff tried to convert the unstructured flow of spontaneous and often excited discourse into grammatical English prose and to edit out verbal detours and conceptual dead ends. A copy of the "improved" transcript was then sent to each of the participants who had contributed substantially to the discussion, so that they might straighten out ambiguities and infelicities that remained and, if they wished, rephrase their remarks so as to make their meaning clearer.

When these corrections had been received and incorporated into the transcription, another editing was undertaken by the CEMREL staff, with special attention to such things as punctuation and grammatical consistency, so that the transcription might be read without the reader's being distracted by bothersome irrelevancies.

The transcription printed here, therefore, is less a record of what the participants said at the symposium than a record of what the participants, by virtue of the human brain's magnificent ability to decode and unscramble language, may have heard at the symposium.

We hope that this document will have value for English teachers and English educators as a contribution to the current dialogue between the Brunerians and the new progressivists about the purposes and proper contents of "English." "Drama" has assumed an almost symbolic place in these dialogues, and to our knowledge the issues that will have to be faced in trying to redefine English so that it encompasses drama have not previously been laid out in such detail as on the following pages.

September 1, 1969

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The arduous work of preparing the transcriptions of the symposium proceedings was done by Mrs. Pat Simmons, Miss Debbie Neary, and Mrs. Mary Kunstman. The recording of the proceedings was handled by Mr. Dave Boyanchek, who also took the photographs used to illustrate this report. Dr. Brian Hansen and Mr. Alan Engelsman assisted with the editing of the transcriptions; and Dave Boyanchek assisted with the artwork and layouts.

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- 10/11/12/13/14/15/16

First Day

One of the Improvised Scenes

GEVANTHOR: Now, I'd like two people to come up here quickly and have a seat. You may talk about anything you want to. Okay? Let's get something from the audience, anyway. What do you want to hear?

VOICES: Sheep shearing! Garbage strike!

GEVANTHOR: Okay. Garbage strike. You want to talk about that? All right. I'd like one of you to take a point of view on this, please.

HANSEN: Somebody's for it?

ENGELSMAN: Do you want us to choose....

GEVANTHOR: Either one.

ENGELSMAN: I'm against it.

HANSEN: I'm in favor of a garbage strike?

GEVANTHOR: This is your point of view, both of you. As individuals.

HANSEN: Do we....

GEVANTHOR: Yes, yes, just you, both of you. I don't know your names.

ENGELSMAN: Brian and Alan.

GEVANTHOR: Yes. Brian and Alan talking about this. Just make the adjustment of having a point of view.

ENGELSMAN: Every time you open a newspaper it's another strike. Now these guys are getting paid better than you and I are.

HANSEN: Wait a minute wait a minute wait a minute. We've got public services....

ENGELSMAN: They get better paid than you and I. Now do they deserve it? I could go out and get---- it's good outside work. I wouldn't mind doing that rather than sitting at a desk all the time.

HANSEN: Just one question, have you ever collected garbage? You ever dug a ditch?

ENGELSMAN: Well, listen, I carry the garbage out every day.

HANSEN: Now, wait a minute, it isn't the same thing, we're talking about 8 hours a day.

ENGELSMAN: I go out and I carry the garbage right down to the trucks for those guys.

HANSEN: Those cans. That's a hundred pounds apiece.

ENGELSMAN: They don't even come and collect my garbage all the time. I call them up and I have to say, "You didn't collect the garbage today".

GEVANTHOR: Okay, terrific, terrific. Now I want to ask the audience to please think, this is a garbage strike, what two characters do you think best illustrates or best explores this topic--two types of people, other than these did.

RESPONSE: Labor leader.

GEVANTHOR: A Labor leader and who else?

RESPONSE: A bank teller.

GEVANTHOR: A bank teller. Okay, which one would be for the strike? All right, who's the labor leader? You?

RESPONSE: Okay.

GEVANTHOR: And you're the bank teller. Now, here's what I'd like you to do. Just from whatever you understand about labor leader and bank teller, just begin to try to think through the structure of that kind of a person, whatever you know about them. Whatever you feel about people like doesn't matter, just begin to take the point of view coming to light through a labor leader and a bank teller and continue the same conversation - be affected by whatever impulses you get as a labor leader and a bank teller. Okay? Talk.

ENGELSMAN: I see you're off rather early today, but you bring in the money anyhow.

HANSEN: Typical attitude. When you white collar cats, when you get organized then we can talk. But until you're organized, don't bother me.

ENGELSMAN: We got our organization but we gotta work, you know? We don't..we don't..we don't..

HANSEN: Wait, say that again, I want to hear you 3 times.

ENGELSMAN: Here, you're standing out there, you've got your whole bunch of crumb bums behind you, and we sit here, we work, we've got our grievances, but we go through it with normal, you know, procedures.

HANSEN: That's really very funny.

ENGELSMAN: We bargain a little....

HANSEN: Wait a second, wait a second, Buddy, you don't even know what you're talking about. Come back to my original question. Did you ever do any hard physical work? You didn't, you sit in your beautiful bank surrounded by money and your secretaries are all beautiful. It's important, man, it's important man, because if you're gonna spend 8 - 10 hours a day on a job you depend on your surroundings. Look my men, they're on the street, it's cold out there, the garbage is frozen this time of year.

ENGELSMAN: Okay, your poor men, I feel a little sorry for them, but look at you, you're the type that rakes in all the profits of this thing. They wouldn't even need a strike if you labor leaders wouldn't rake in all....

HANSEN: You know how much I make; do you have any idea how much I make?

ENGELSMAN: I bet you make a hell of a lot more than I do.

HANSEN: That may well be.

ENGELSMAN: That may well be, look, you come in, I know what you make, I see what your bank account is all the time. I don't make that kind of stuff.

GEVANTHOR: Let's take it a step further, please, I want to get it from you. What place, what environment, place, do you think, let's throw them out, that these two could meet, a place, that would also heighten the topic. Where would they meet?

VOICES: Cafeteria. Bar. Bank. Garbage dump. Stag bar. He's taking his own garbage to the dump.

GEVANTHOR: No, don't tell him what he's doing, just call out the place. Think of a place that would really heighten the subject matter.

VOICE: Union Hall.

GEVANTHOR: Call them out.

HANSEN: Do we pick one, what do we do?

GEVANTHOR: I want to fill the air with places.

VOICES: Turkish bath? The Civic Club. Laundromat.

GEVANTHOR: Which one excites you the most? Which place really....

HANSEN: A Turkish bath? It doesn't seem that we just have to pick something that....instead of just making it funny or cute....

GEVANTHOR: No, we're not making it funny or cute. I'm thinking of a place that would heighten the talk....

VOICE: Church.

GEVANTHOR: In a church. What's the subject matter?

VOICE: Garbage strike.

GEVANTHOR: Garbage strike, okay.

VOICE: A funeral.

GEVANTHOR: Well, choose one place.

VOICES: Cocktail party. At a saloon.

HANSEN: I like the garbage dump.

GEVANTHOR: You like the garbage dump.

HANSEN: It has some kind of logical relationship.

GEVANTHOR: Okay. Where's the garbage dump? Are you sitting there, you're not sitting there? What would you be doing there? Don't tell us just do it. How old a man are you as a union leader?

HANSEN: Late forties.

GEVANTHOR: How much do you weigh?

HANSEN: Maybe 230.

GEVANTHOR: All right, put 30 more lbs. on. How old are you?

ENGELSMAN: I'm 32 and I weigh 150.

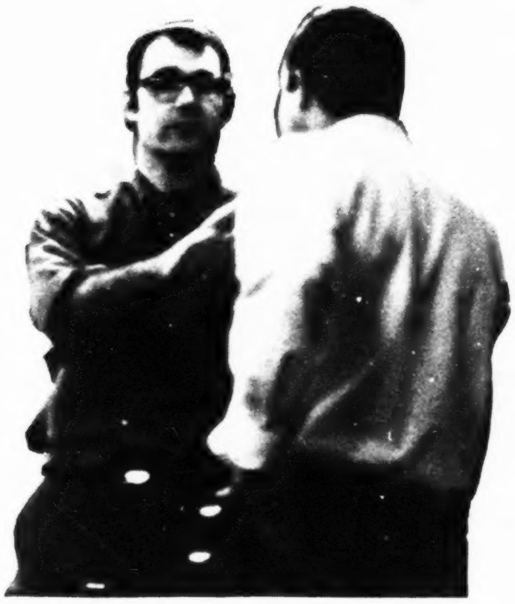
GEVANTHOR: How much do you weigh now?

ENGELSMAN: 185.

GEVANTHOR: You gotta lose....

ENGELSMAN: 30 pounds.

GEVANTHOR: Know where you're losing it. And let that affect your energy, the more weight and the less weight. Now, just come in, just get there. Let's say this is the first meeting. You don't have to start arguing at the first meeting. You don't know each other.



HANSEN: Put it down! Let's see your card, please.

ENGELSMAN: Card?

HANSEN: Let me explain something. You don't carry garbage in the city unless you got a card.

ENGELSMAN: Who are you? I mean, I got garbage piled up like mad, my boss tells me to bring in the stuff. What are you guys, calling this strike? I work in a bank, I'm supposed to sit behind a desk.

HANSEN: I'm very interested in your problems, are you interested in mine?

ENGELSMAN: Yeh, I'm interested in your problems, but listen...

HANSEN: Wait a minute, see out there, acres right? 143,000,000 tons of garbage turned out of this city every day, right? And who carries it? My men! Not you! My men!

ENGELSMAN: Okay, I don't care about the 143 tons, I'm concerned about...

HANSEN: Back in the trunk of your car.

ENGELSMAN: Oh brother! You can strike, but it doesn't make any difference to me about your strike, I......

HANSEN: Pick it up! I said pick it up!

GEVANTHOR: Okay. Good. Let's go, come on. First I want your point of view on it. So explore it as deeply as you can as an individual as yourself here when you get up here. It's very important that you explore your own point of view the first time your're here.

JIM HOETKER: I want to repeat some of the points made in the correspondence about this symposium. Why we're having it. I think there are two reasons, primarily. One is directly related to the Educational Laboratory Theatre Project. For a couple thousand English teachers who have borne the brunt of this project, drama has suddenly become very salient, a lot more central, a lot more important, a lot more of a problem than it was before. And many teachers have found that the traditional methods of treating a dramatic text are really not awfully relevant to the performance of a play. In trying to solve this problem of relating a printed play to a performed play, people have been experimenting with improvisational techniques. Shirley Trusty has really been the most active in this. Bob and Norman have given workshops here in the last year; Tony Montanaro and Viola Spolin have also. The reaction of teachers who have been exposed to these improvisational techniques has been very good, very enthusiastic. And there is something working there that we thought would be profitable to explore further with a number of people representing different disciplines. Secondly, the matter of improvisation and teaching literature and language is a small aspect of a larger sort of movement that is taking place in the English teaching profession right now. Putting an emphasis on drama, on oral language, on the movement and the physical dimensions of communication. This I guess has been sparked by, more than anything else, the Dartmouth seminars a couple of years ago. And the publications which have come out of those. We thought we might look at this whole problem at the same time we're considering the specific problem of improvisation. Just what is the role of non-printed-on-a-page language in the English curriculum? Yesterday, we saw some demonstrations, had some experiences, and today we want to talk about some of the problems and questions and some of the attitudes of the present group here.

FATHER WILHELMY: We intend to have a short presentation by our panelists and then a discussion. We feel that some of the questions which were raised by you yesterday, and categorized by us (maybe arbitrarily), should be dealt with this morning and others of them in the afternoon. For this purpose we drew up an outline. This morning we are going to ask why, when and how. First of all, under the whys: Why are we teaching literature at all? Why do we want to use improvisation in the teaching of literature? Is there a relationship between the two whys, between the teaching of literature and the improvisational method, that is important and viable? (I am assuming here that improvisation will open the student to a discovery of himself and his own personal experience and, therefore, improvisation will make teaching much easier.) Is improvisation directly usable in teaching literature or language or other elements of English, such as writing, style, composition and so on? That seems to be all of the material we have gathered under the whys. Now on to when. If we can find a common viable, harmonious relationship between improvisation and the teaching of literature, when do we introduce the improvisational techniques? Do we use the improvisational methods in grade school, in high school, or in college? And again, when--before, during, or after we have presented the literature? Or when--as regard to the type or genre of the literature? When we are dealing with poetry, drama, the epic, the novel, or the short story? Now to the hows: How do we deal with the specific student; under this question "how" we must ask the question, who? Do we deal with the gifted student and how? The less academically talented student? The student who cannot read and is culturally deprived?

Finally, how much? To what degree do we use improvisation? Should the English course be structured around improvisation as the core? Or, should improvisation be structured around a somewhat traditional English course that stresses content as its core? How much time should be spent with improvisation? Can any lasting benefits be derived from the improvisational method when used sporadically or just for a short amount of time in the classroom? Well, that's the material for this morning. [Laughter]

The questions we would like to confront this afternoon are: If we grant that improvisation is directly usable in teaching literature and can be beneficial in our classroom, there will have to take place certain changes within the teacher and certain changes within the environment external to the teacher. Changes within the teacher: Can any teacher be trained to use improvisation or does the method depend on a certain gift or genius or charism? Can the traditionally orientated teacher be motivated to use improvisational methods? Further, does improvisation require training at all? Does not the very theory of improvisation, the philosophy of improvisation seem to deny training?

Then, assuming that we would want to use improvisation in our school, changes would be necessitated in the environment surrounding the teacher: How would improvisation relate to the school day; how would it relate to the curriculum; how would the use of improvisation relate to room and place; how would improvisation relate to other members on the faculty; and, finally, improvisation and its relationship to the parents. Parental expectations may not include improvisational techniques in the classroom. But if the teacher has some sort of rapport with the community and through the administration works with the parents, maybe something could be done to change these parental expectations.

With the previous questions, why, when, and how, relegated to this morning and with the question of intrinsic change to the teacher and extrinsic change to the teacher relegated to this afternoon, I would like to introduce the members who are going to kick off our panel presentation this morning. First of all, Bob Alexander who is the Director of the Theatre for Children at the Arena Stage Theatre in Washington, D.C.; Dr. Eli M. Bower, School of Education, University of California at Berkeley; Dr. Ruth Halpert, Assistant Professor, Psychological Foundations, School of Education, San Fernando Valley State College in California; Wally Smith, Director of the Illinois Demonstration Center for the Gifted in Arts, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois, and the Vice President of the American Educational Theatre Association.

ELI BOWER: You know, I'm reminded of the kid who went to the museum with his father and his father said, "You go out and look around, there are lots of things here that you ought to know." So he went out and he came back, his father sitting there reading the paper and he said, "Dad, how come the periodic table was arranged in groups of eight." Father said, "I don't really know." So he went off to another place and came back and said, "Dad, how come there are all those convolutions on the brain?" Dad: "I don't really know." And he went back and said, "Dad, how come the whales are so big?" "I don't really know." About 50 questions later he said, "Dad, are all these questions bothering you?" And Dad said, "No, how else will you learn anything?"

So, we've had the questions, I don't know whether we'll have any answers or not, but maybe we can look at some of them. I think one of the problems is, you get people like Viola, Bob, and Norman, who are operating in an area of feeling and an area of experience, and you try to superimpose some theoretical base on this kind of thing. You try to put it together in relationship to education. I think this is what we are talking about. How does it fit? How does this whole field of improvisation fit? I'm not just going to talk about improvisation, I'm going to talk about a kind of activity which has play as its conceptual base. There are a variety of possibilities in this, improvisation being one type of activity. I'd hate to limit it just to that kind of very specific program aspect. We're talking about the relationship between that kind of modality, which is a play modality, in relation to learning which many of us have conceptualized as an intellectual or cognitive modality, and the thing that Viola was talking about yesterday--where is the connection? and how do you make a connection which integrates the individual, which puts him together? The other side of it is that for many years we have been over-intellectualizing to the point where Newton's Second Law has almost come into effect and we have people now who are anti-intellectual in a sense, by saying: "Intellectualism is a form of authority; let's go the other route. Let's feel all over the place and forget about tying it in to any other part of itself." The problem is having put these two parts of the human organism together, so that, on one hand, you don't get an overly rigid professor type; so, on the other hand, you don't produce mental hospital cases who are pretty good at feeling, but have very little reality testing. The problem is how do you connect these two. And I think perhaps later on we'll get into some of the possibilities of doing that.

RUTH HALPERT: Why are we teaching literature? I think most of us agree that we can't separate the cognitive from the affective objectives of a literature program. What I found talking to people and studying curriculum programs was that there was agreement that the goals of an English program are (1) to appreciate literature and (2) to experience vicariously, so to speak, to learn a little bit about yourself and a little bit about who you might be; and (3) to gain insight into an experience. And how do we gain insight into an experience? The curriculum studies suggest that maybe by becoming aware of complexities of human beings and how humans function, learning about the clash of values, becoming aware of the humanness, the things we have in common, learning something about the beauty and significance of every day.

I think there are some similar assumptions that most of us here have expressed one way or another. That is, that people don't learn by stuffing them full of facts; people have to feel in order to learn; by feeling we determine what we see, what we perceive; and that determines what we think about; students learn by involvement, students learn by participating; they learn what is meaningful to them; they learn what they're comfortable with; they learn when they are in a learning environment, where teachers are in the process of learning with them. Now the question is, can improvisation help us to get to some of these goals? As far as I'm concerned the answer is "yes," absolutely. It works!

The first goal, to appreciate,--I don't know of any research on that one--we don't know yet about how people learn to appreciate. We don't know the process that goes on. People I've spoken to have suggested that if you've ever danced yourself, if you participated in that dimension--movement--you then go to the dance theatre and see differently. You see more things than the nondancer sees on stage. If you've ever painted a picture, brush in hand, put the brush in oil, put it up on a piece of canvas, you have a different feeling when you start looking at pictures. But I don't know that anywhere in research it says you have to participate in order to appreciate. And that one I'm going to leave open; I think it's still a key question. The second goal that I've seen in curriculum studies related to English teaching is that we have to read to learn to experience vicariously, to find and test ourselves. If the goal of the program is to give personal integrating experiences to people, then maybe we have to provide students with integrating kinds of experiences. And that's something I saw happening through the improvisational experiences demonstrated yesterday. There was a whole child up on the stage participating. So I see some uses in these games, these exercises, just to achieve that goal. The other category of goals was to gain insight into the human experience, to learn about complex human nature, to learn about others' values, to learn about the beauty of everyday life, to see things as others see them. Here I see the use of improvisation. Some illustrations. We give them (the students) a problem. A young man enters a store to buy something and is told to take out the dirty linen. How does it feel? What do you want to do about it? Do you like the fact that you entered the store just to buy something, and you're told to take out dirty linens? What are some of the inner-reactions? Do this scene, work on it, now read Black Boy. We give them a problem to work on, how does it feel to try other roles? For this particular role, we call for problem solving behavior. Some people are using improvisation just to teach the content of plain old composition classes. I just saw a beautiful film made in an Oakland, California school. Students were having difficulty just functioning and learning how to use a sentence, much less tell a story. And what they did was but some cameras for young people, $20 worth of equipment for each student. And they said to the kids, "Go out and take pictures, give yourself a problem in the school environment and go out and take pictures of your problem." What one student came up with was just taking pictures of feet. He took pictures of a boy's feet as they wandered through the school building. And then he was told to take the frames of these pictures and splice them and put them together and tell a story. Well, it became a fantastically interesting story. He had the feet first stopping at a girl's feet and the feet talked to each other. And the feet move to a principal's office and all you saw was the principal's feet and the boy's feet. You could see the feet running down the steps on the way home from school. Okay, it tells a story. We start out then by doing the activity and then we say, "What is a story?" We start by doing and then we say, "What does it mean?" We work to solve the problem and in the process learn about sequence in story telling.

They're doing very interesting things with children's stories. In desperation, because they are finding that old methods are not working with many students. The kind of thing Bob keeps wanting to say over and over. You have to start where the students are. You might start with one picture, or a series of four pictures. Ask students what happened before, what happened afterwards, describe it, act it out, tell us about it. Write the middle, here's the beginning, here's a possible ending. What do you think might have happened in the beginning? In the middle? What do you think could happen if you start the story this way? Let's start telling stories:one person tells the first part of the story, the next person tells the next part. You have to listen if you are going to tell a story to each other. It can be an exciting thing. This is partially improvising, moving it, letting the problem move you. And there is no right or wrong answer. They've done a lot with writing the first line of poetry. "When I Was A Boy, a very little boy I..." And then the children in the room add lines: I did this, I did that. Or "When I was a teen, a very young teen I..." And beautiful collages of poetry come out, exquisite. Students have to learn to listen to each other and express feelings about what happened to them when they were little children or when they were teens, and added together we get an experience. One more word. I think some very exciting things are happening with improvisation even in terms of producing materials. Did anyone see "Big Time Buck White?" What did you think about it as theatre? This came out of the Watts workshop, a little bit of improvisation with ideas. They started there with improvisation around familiar things that the young people in Watts were involved in and they worked on scenes. These were real problems for these young people, all they had to do then was elaborate on the things that they knew, the language they knew, and the experiences they knew. Some of them become good plays. I don't know if they'll be lasting plays. But the writers and actors are having a great integrating experience by working on familiar problems using this method.

BOB ALEXANDER: I take for granted, all the time, that everybody knows. That you don't have to start at the beginning. But that's a big mistake. Nobody knows and I'm going to start from the beginning. I'm a theatre person, I've been in professional theatre for 20 years, as an actor, stage manager, director, producer. Thirty-three years ago I was in the first grade. That started a twelve-year nightmare. I spent 12 more years trying to undo that nightmare, so that I could be a happy, successful human being. I don't think about that, it was like I blocked it out, all that twelve years of school. And I graduated an honor student, and I had an opportunity to go to any university in the world, and I said, "What, I have to volunteer now for another 4 years of this?" No. That's my educational experience.

We got into teaching teachers and teaching children with improvisational theatre techniques because we were asked to come up with a program, a fast Spring program. And we had been teaching acting, teaching the art and the craft of acting, which is a very, very difficult discipline. It is almost impossible to teach in a lifetime and very, very few human beings have ever attained the genius of the art of theatre, not the business of theatre, not the success of theatre, the art of theatre which is to become another human being and embody it in an artistic form. That means to think, feel, somebody else's life in front of 800 or 1000 people and reveal human behavior on its deepest level of existence. Impossible. That's why only once in a while when you see a performance you are so moved by it that your life is changed because of that. Okay. I was teaching theatre to children, little ones and teenagers, and adults. In a workshop environment. They were not cute little actors. They were actors; they were able to reveal human behavior on a very deep level of human experience with great joy; they talked about themselves; they interacted; they hit each other; they had deep communication, group feeling. After 6 or 7 months of the workshop they trusted me and then were able to reveal their behavior as if an adult wasn't there. And, by the way, that is quite a different behavior. Children behave a certain way when an adult is in their presence, and very few us know how they behave when an adult isn't around, and it's very different. My experience working with children is that it takes a long, long time before they really trust me when I say, "This is your workshop, this is your environment, anything you do is right, anything you do is right." And they spend months of baiting me, and testing me, and destroying, and they want to see when they get clobbered. But I don't clobber. Then one day God comes into the room, one day that sun shines, one day they interact with each other with the freedom and the relief that whatever they do they will not get put down for it. So when they came to us and said come up with something for education, I said to myself, "Look, I've been teaching this very difficult subject matter, and I've been teaching it this way,and it's been working." I really never thought about it before. "What is teaching?" Teaching any subject is the same. To teach and to learn is to interact. The organism of the student should be in a very high, excited state so that it is receptive, so that it can receive and it wants to receive. The atmosphere should be full of energy, electricity, so when that information is out in the air and is floating around and is very dynamic. And the teacher should be in a highly sensitive state, his sensory apparatus should be alively functioning so that the teacher is in deep contact with every student and can see in their sensorial life what is happening, because everybody is very different. And I'm saying words now that everybody has heard: everybody is very different. I don't think we know that. I don't think we treat each other as if everybody is very different, and we sure the hell don't treat children as if every child is very different. But we are. We are very different. So, I felt that every subject matter could be taught in the same environment in which I had taught a very, very difficult subject matter: in that workshop environment.

Now. *It is impossible to be wrong in an improvisational workshop*. Because what you do in an improvisational workshop is you use yourself to become other people; you behave as a human being. And there is nobody presumptuous enough in this world to tell somebody else that what you have just done as a garbage collector, as a teenager, as a student, as any other person in the world, is incorrect. You can't say to somebody, "No, that's not the way people act, the way people behave." It's impossible to do that. So if you cannot do that, then anything that student does in that workshop is right. And it is my experience in working with children over the last decade that that is what has to happen, they have to be right, they have to feel great, they have to feel their greatness over, and over, and over again. Because the whole society and the whole world and the whole adult world is constantly trying to take *that* away from them. E. E. Cummings says, "To be yourself in a world which is doing its best night and day to make you into somebody else is to fight the hardest battle that a human being can fight." Well, that's what it is, when you're small. It's a different world than we know. The most important thing in the world to kids is what they feel, not what we think they feel, or want them to feel, but what they feel about their life. The expression of that in painting, in literature, in writing poetry, in playing a game--that is what I'm concerned about in my dealings with young people.

Improvisation is terrific because you re-invent. When we teach acting they re-invent theatre; we don't teach them theatre, we allow them to re-invent it. Piaget says you learn only so far as you re-invent something. Well, that's a long process. Our educational system says that in twelve years you have to have a certain quantity of information. It negates the natural biological growth and process of the human being. We all know that? How come we don't do anything about it? Okay. To allow someone to re-invent something so that when they learn it, *they learn it*. *They learn it*. Themselves. Not somebody else helping them. When a kid is playing around with a typewriter it's easy to say that if you punch it a little harder you get the mark. Maybe it'll take him six months to find it out himself that if he punches it a little harder he gets the mark. And I am convinced of, truly, truly convinced--not what I think, but what the truth is--that it is more important that he makes that discovery, and anybody that has ever made a discovery or reinvented something in this room knows that feeling. In comic books they make an electric light go off in your head. In your head you know the feeling of doing something for the first time and it's yours. Boy, you're a world beater. And everything changes.

Literature is about people; history is about people...real people like you and me and the youth, and black revolution and now! I think we must begin in grade school. We must. If you start with a 13-year old, it's too late, too late. They've already had 13 years of being supressed and told they were fools and idiots every time they did a movement, or any time they sung. That's the battle I have to fight.

Dr. Sullivan said that if a whole generation of people never went to school it would be marvelous for this world. I personally believe that to be true. Everybody I say that to says, "You're crazy, you're crazy, it's important, it's important." I think we are hanging on to something that we went through when we were children (and "we didn't turn out so bad") and we keep it going perpetually. Let me ask a question. We all know that from the time he is 5 to 18, the child is in a school environment where 90% of the children get psychologically mutilated so that they become malfunctioning human beings--everybody knows that, it's been written in a thousand books. Even the conservatives know that. What worse could happen if they never went to school? We know that we're not teaching them, that they are coming out of schools unable to read at 13 years old, and that's not a minority, that's a majority. What could be worse if they never went to school? Well, thinking of that, then I have to deal very differently with the children that I deal with in trying to get them to feel like they are great people. Because they are. And someone has made them feel less than that. And that is the important thing in this life. Not how much you know, not how much knowledge you have in your head, not how smart or intellectually facile you are. That will come, that has to come, because as John Holt says, "Man is by nature a thinker and a learner, he cannot stop thinking or learning or he will die," he must think and learn, he wants to, and we all watch babies from 0 to 5 and see how much they learn. All by themselves. You cannot teach everybody everything he wants to learn. Do you believe it? I believe it. You cannot. A baby learns to turn over, sit up, crawl, walk, and if you're a groovy parent you let him alone and he discovers everything all by himself. What do we want these children to be when they are 18, or 22, or 40? I think you must ask yourself that question: What do you want them to be? And if you want them to be vital, strong, independently thinking organisms who can have an influence on their time, on their brothers, and on their sisters, and on their fellow men, and if you believe as I do that we don't have too much time left to do that, then you must take your head and throw it out and start fresh. I have a 5-year old--what do I want him to be? what is my job with him? what is my life with him? why the hell am I in his life? what is he all about?

God knows, ladies and gentlemen there's enough material in those questions that you can spend the next 150 years thinking and reading information about the child. But in the educational system as we know it we do not use that information.

The same thing in children's theatres; we're still doing fairy tales written in an authoritarian age when nobody knew anything about children except they were young adults who should keep their mouths shut. Where there's a law on every page and if you lie your nose falls off, your penis falls of, or your something falls off. Well, we know that we don't do that with our own children, yet we continually perpetuate that kind of fascistic literature on their minds to brainwash them. Improvisation works because that child, that adult, that teenager is allowed and actively encouraged to be whatever he wants to be, to say whatever he wants to say, to feel whatever he wants to feel. And when somebody in a workshop is turned on, when they know they're alive, their life is affected. Do you know that teenagers start thinking about themselves differently so that their school is different, their parents are different, their sexual life is different, their thought patterns are different, their actions are different? We have changed behavior. That process has changed behavior. I want to get this in the air because yesterday the questions indicated that we are not talking about working with children on that kind of a level. And I want to talk to that point. That's why I came down here. I want to talk to that point and you people make me very nervous. I'm very nervous here because you're all heads or something. I've worked with hundreds of teachers in the last two years and hundreds of kids and 85 ministers. My expertise comes out of working with people and seeing the results. Now I come in here and these questions are asked. On what level are we starting from? I don't want to start on some kind of academic level, whether it works or not, or whether the kid can learn literature. Do you all know what literature is? Sure you do. You all know the importance of it and you know that if you had to go to school where your kids are going and learn what they're learning that you'd turn off. And you'd say, the hell with it, and you couldn't tolerate the conditions. You all know that. Then why don't you surrender to your knowledge as real deep beautiful human beings, get in contact with yourself before you start throwing out ideas about what we're going to do to an educational system that is miserably failing and producing human beings that's making this planet an insane mess. And we all know that too. But we don't want to deal with it. We don't want to deal with the black revolution, we don't want to deal with the youth revolution. "It's going to pass." It's not going to pass. And we'd better come along, boy, or we're all going to be left way behind, because they don't need us anymore. They found they can play by themselves, they found that they can make their own courses, hire their own teachers, find their own student body, and they're learning.

JIM HOETKER: Bob, you are making me feel like not everything I do is right.

BOB ALEXANDER: That's not my job here.

WALLY SMITH: I was very interested in what you had to say, Bob. I think that almost everybody I know in education believes what you've said. There are some places where they are actually trying to do that. I hope not to speak with pride, although I do it, when I say I come from a school where many of these things are done. One teacher walks into a class and puts his feet up on the desk and says, "Well, what do we do today?" I know this to some extent, and I speak behavioristically now, because I run a program for visitation to Evanston Township High School and people come in there very often and say the rapport between the students and teachers is so good. It's a common thing that they've said in the last several years: "The students talk to the teachers." And we have had some results, evidence from this kind of thing, the kind of thing we're talking about. A freedom of activities. We're not perfect by any means, and there are some teachers who don't believe that this is a good thing and so on. But there are some differences from most schools. Our students have 30 to 35% of the day unscheduled, and they can go into the cafeteria and eat if they want to, all day if they want to, if they don't have a class. They have at least six choices, more than that, in the structure of the school day. So what I'm trying to say is there are attempts being made in a number of places in the country that change this kind of thing that you are talking about, the prison in which we have been locked in the past. To break the Carnegie unit, to break the eight-grade schools, structurally and architecturally. To rearrange the school day to fit people rather than to fit people into an already preconceived structure. There are 200 school systems right now that do not require their students to be there every day. At any rate, to come back to improvisation, I must say that my orientation to this is in the theatre. We have used it in some form or another in Evanston for at least 11 years. In the elementary schools we've had creative dramatics, which does deal in some degree with this, for 45 years, so that we're getting students in high school who have attitudes toward some of these things that are rather unusual.

So, just giving you that general background, let me say this about what seems to me has occurred here in the last two days. It seems to me that the people who have been working with improvisation here, Viola Spolin, Norm, have indicated that there are some goals involved in what they do. They talk about what you're supposed to get out of this, what is supposed to happen to people. They also indicated there is some sequence and scope, in educational terms. That there is a process that you go through. It isn't just a hit or miss kind of helter-skelter, let's-have-fun-right-now sort of thing. That there are certain ideas that follow one another. You can find those in terms (I made a list yesterday) like, "It wasn't time for him to do this." This indicates Viola is observing the student doing something and thinking, "He is not ready to do something else," or that "He is ready to do this right now." She was able to discern a certain kind of change taking place in the student. My question about improvisation is: How much training does it take for a teacher to be able to observe those behaviors, to know what's happening to the student, so that he can say, 'Now is the time for this student to move on to something else.' To another kind of exercise, to another step in the improvisational sequence. It seems to me that if the goals listed for improvisation are to open people up, to make them more receptive, to touch greater depths, it then becomes a tool or a technique. In my own feeling, that's not true, and I don't really, in my own self, separate improvisation from the theatre. I think it is the theatre; it is an art. And in one sense, an actor is an eternal improvisor. Sometimes he improvises with his own material and, as he advances and is able to do so, he brings in more and more experience. In the Stanislavskian sense, he is kind of a funnel opening upward. It seems to me that the goal of an actor in training is to be ultimately himself, be able to do anything that's possible that he can. Sometimes he improvises with a script. When he can no longer improvise, when he can no longer bring anything fresh to that performance with the script, then he's really kind of dead in a sense.

Now that's a hazy kind of statement, but it seems to me that in regard to these goals of opening these people and freeing them and retouching their depths, that when we put a subject matter on top of that and say, "You are to use improvisation in literature," then you immediately limit the improvisation. No longer is it really improvisation but is perhaps dramatic technique or dramatic method. Let me, in order to explain that a little more, let me say this. It seems to me that art is an expression of the relationship between man and the universe. It seems to me that theatrical art is the one which uses man himself both as the means and as the end to achieve the expression of that relationship. That means that in the theatre art we do the things that we do everyday in some special arrangement perhaps or in some special form, but we do the things that we do everyday untranslated. In most of the other arts, it seems to me, including literature, they are symbolized in plastic form or color or dimensions. In film they are symbolized in moving pictures. In dance, in movement. But in the theatre any of these things might be used, but primarily it is the human figure that is doing something like what people do in a number of different circumstances. That's led me to say that the theatre is essentially non-literary and non-verbal. Which brings me back to improvisation. Except as speaking is part of improvisation.

Now there's another thing that I'd like to say just in conclusion here. That is, that in a free and open atmosphere, like numbers of us believe should occur in the public schools, at least so far as we have been able to achieve that sort of thing at Evanston, another thing happens which I think has an effect on improvisation. The people in the English department are improvising, too, in teaching literature. Then there is, I noticed this and a couple others did too, a greater demand on the part of the students for content and perhaps even departmentalization of the materials, because when the problems that Bob talked about just a few minutes ago have been eliminated, when the problems of human relationship are at least reduced between the teacher and the students, then those are no longer problems. People are free and open to do anything they want to, and the kids say, "I want to know physics" and "I want to know literature" and "You're doing the same thing they're doing over in this other class, but I want to know what this is right here."

If everybody is running around improvising all over the place, then that sort of experience is no longer a new thing. It seems to me that there's some evidence from educational research to show that anytime you put something different than what people have been doing into the class, it becomes exciting and interesting to them. So to an extent, if everybody is free and open then there is a possibility that students will demand more structure, in the sense that they want concentration on a certain area. I've seen them do this, the students have said this. "We don't want to do that, we do that over there, let's do this here." "We came to this class because we want to know American Literature." "We came into this class because we want to know Psychology." "We want to know physics." Human relationships is beside the point right here. They don't really need that. They're no longer a great problem to them. They feel they can say that to a teacher. "I don't like what you're teaching, I don't want to do that. Let's do this" and their demand becomes a concentration on content.

FATHER WILHELMY: Why are we using improvisation? Why are we using improvisation in literature? Is there a relationship between improvisation and the teaching of literature? I'd like to hear from many of you. I know you've been doing it, you've been trying it, in your classroom and I'd like you to share your ideas. Why are we teaching it? Why are we using it? Who wants to start the ball rolling?

ELI BOWER: Let's look at this from another point of view, we may be missing something that we may be able to introduce, something I feel is missing. We're getting a lot of people who are excited, fine. But we're dealing with a problem for which nobody has a theoretical base. We're saying a lot of good things. Simply on the basis of the fact that we believe it. There's something wrong with that. This sort of thing leads on to good fortune, but it has to lead on. I hope we're not coming to the place where we're going to have a religious revival of some sort. Or that this doesn't become the new mystique. I know how excited Bob is about it. That's not enough, Bob. There's a lot of other things that have to go on. You're not going to change the school system by banging your fists on it and saying, "Let's become a little bit more creative."

In California things are either right or left, there's nothing in the middle, and we don't want that. I was at a workshop two years ago on sensitivity training for school psychologists. (In California everybody is either receiving or giving it.) And one speaker went on to say that the coming revolution would see us all in sensitivity training in one way or another. And we had a good group of people. Carl Rogers on down. (Or up, as the case may be.) I was the last in this parade. But everything was going to be hunkydory, I was told, if we could only accept this notion, that good personal relationships would result from this sort of thing and we'd all be more effective in everything we did. And I said,--at that time I lived in Bethesda--I'm going back to Bethesda, and I'm going by TWA. And I hope that the pilot has good relationships with his wife and his family, but I'll be damned if I'm going to fly with him if he doesn't know how to fly. There are some things in life that we have to know. The problem I think is this, education is many things; the human organism is involved with many things, and many kinds of transactions with the environment. What we're talking about in the play modality is to introduce some theoretical basis for saying, if you do this kind of thing a certain kind of way, it will help the organism to be more effective in a certain kind of way, as a learner, as an individual, and so on. Now, I would like to take it out of the narrow scheme, improvisation. I don't think improvisation is a technique in and of itself. It is an introduction or a prolongation of the play modality. Old man Freud said a lot of things that he refuted later on in life, but one of the things he said, and which I think is still impressive, is the fact that education is the giving up the pleasure principle of behavior on the basis of the reality principle, but only on the basis of keeping the pleasure principle alive. If this is a little mysterious to you, the pleasure principle is what children have that gives them the impetus to grow, to function; the small top of the iceberg which keeps us alive in a world which has physical laws which we have to learn about to keep alive. If you go up on a high building and you jump, the chances are you will fall at 32 feet per second per second. There are certain other laws which are related to reality and this is the kind of thing we have to deal with.

And it's in the connection between the two, keeping this little child part of us alive. Freud has said this is like a wilderness area, that you can go back to every once in awhile, and you can feel free to deal with. And it's in connecting this wilderness area with the other area that we later on develop that gives us this connection. This is what integration is. It's really taking primary process thinking, which is emotionalized thinking, and tying it into reality kind of thinking, which is rational. People in mental hospitals can't do this kind of thinking. That's why we have problems in this area. And it is not only the schools, but many other institutions which need to deal with this. Everybody seems to feel it is only the school that needs worry about this kind of thing. And everybody imposes these sanctions on the schools. But there are other possibilities. And if the school is an institution which is too difficult to change, there are other ways to deal with this. There are other institutions that might be very useful and very important access roads to this kind of thing. But when you come down to it, Bob, some of these things have to be dealt with, from a scientific point of view as well as from an artistic. You know we have had a lot of people come up to us and say, "We have the truth." It has been revealed to them. Well, many of them may have been right, you see, but somewhere along the line you have to spell it out for that somebody who is more cognitively oriented (and there are people like that in this world), so he can say, "We have tried it out and it works. The evidence is there, that man is much more able to function because of these kinds of experiences in math, literature, and so on." And this is not so difficult. We have to have someone pushing this, but I feel there are other people that you see who push back a little and say, "All right, let's look at it a little more, let's see it for what it is." This is not just theatre. This is something we're trying to introduce into a basic social institution, lousy as it is, which is going to have to make some sense, because some hard-nosed administrator is going to ask, and some poor stupid parent is going to ask, "What's this got to do with school?" And somebody's got to have an answer to that. Just the other day, some lady in PTA was complaining to me about sensitivity training and she said, "What are they trying to do to us?" I said, "What do you mean, what are they trying to do to us?" "Well, you know, we got into a group at a PTA meeting, we sat around, we were asked to face each other, look in each other's eyes, and tell each other the truth." That was in southern California. And she says, "It's a neighbor of mine and I'm not going to tell her the truth. I know who her husband's running around with. But can I tell her that?" But, then she says, "Of course, this is sensitivity training." A lot of these things get tossed around. Dianetics and a few others we mentioned yesterday, which is a great thing in Great Britain now I think. Oh, yeah, I got a lot of literature on it. It's going great guns, because there's a lot of people really believe in it and think that it's the answer.

All I'm saying is, let's not get involved in a sort of oceanic feeling that somehow or other, we're at the point of closure in this thing. Let's look at it, because I think this is the only way we're going to find the truth in some of these programs and also find out how to use it more effectively in the long run. When you look at it as a hardnosed person who is involved with children.

GEOFFREY SUMMERFIELD: May we pause a bit? Question from the floor?

FATHER WILHELMY: Yes.

GEOFFREY SUMMERFIELD: Thank you. I would quarrel with what you just said on two points. I think there's an important distinction between the notion of the reality principle insofar as it refers to the authoritarian laws of the natural world, and the reality principle which is invoked by adults who want to keep the world as it is, not only the natural world, but the institutional, manmade, cultural world, of, for instance, the school. I would say that when innovation is resisted, the appeal often is to a false anology between the ineluctable and unchanging facts of the physical world, and the facts of man's creation, which is the culture of which the institution is a part. So, if we are going to invoke Freud to bolster up our strategy, I think we're going to have to use him very carefully and not play with false analogies. The other point, is that it seems to me that one of the most interesting bits of folklore in teaching at the moment is a folklore that came in large part from Bloom's Taxonomy. It seems to me calamitous in a sense, that Bloom's Taxonomy was divided into volumes, at least in my English edition, one of which was Cognitive Learning and the other of which was Affective Learning. And this has given use to the curious assumption that we live in a dualistic world in which we can have either competent cognitive learning or competent affective learning. As if this intellectual framework, this theoretical framework, this expository framework, is in some way a representation of reality. That is, of the way in which we ourselves operate. And this seems to me to be monstrously unfair. And I'd like to give just one specific example of the dissatisfaction I feel with this kind of dualism, this kind of dichotomy. That is the experience that I had working with a kid in Lincoln, Nebraska, whose main consolation in life (it's really a very dreary sort of life he lives), is the care that he takes of his pigeons he keeps in the back yard of his home. Now this kid is hooked on pigeons and I presume this is in fact an affective phenomenon. But he also presents a cognitive phenomenon, in that he is extremely keen to understand these pigeons as fully and as completely and as adequately as possible. Now, his willingness to extend himself on a cognitive front, is very considerable; it involved, for instance, the analysis of skeletal structures and the recreation of skeleton structures, so as to understand certain fundamental biological facts about those birds. This willingness is rooted in his affection, his care, for his pigeons. Now it would seem to me that the curriculum which is based, however respectably, on the facts of biology , for example, in an academic sense--a curriculum that is based on that sort of basis, but which fails to recognize the fact that this kid begins, he comes into the classroom with, his concern with pigeons, this sort of curriculum seems to me to miss the point. It seems to me to fail to recognize that within our own lives, within our own realities, our ongoing affective and our ongoing cognitive living are intimately related at a very deep, a significant level. And what I would like to plead for is a willingness to hold at arm's length at least, this most unfortunate dichotomy between the affective and the cognitive. Generally speaking, I think that resistance to innovation is based normally on an appeal to the good old days, the good old ways, of cognitive learning and on a profound mistrust, and often proper mistrust of irrationality, of sentimentality, of emotional mush, of emotional misrepresentation. I think we can get much further in thinking about improvisation, for example, if we try to see how the affective and cognitive interpenetrate at all levels.

WALLY SMITH: I'd like to make one short comment to that. Yours is a common statement. I think this has happened to that Taxonomy. But all through it the authors have indicated that should not happen. I would like to say, in regard to improvisation, that just that same kind of misrepresentation of what it actually is could happen. You may get new practitioners of the thing who do something with it that the people who worked with it might never do.

JIM HOETKER: When Bloom and his group went to work 15 or so years ago, on that Taxonomy, there were supposed to be three volumes. The affective took a lot longer to put together than the cognitive, and most of the affective categories are still really cognitive categories, in fact. And there was supposed to be a third volume on the psychomotor domain, which they apparently have given up on. They do not have either the language or the concept to talk about psychomotor activities. To talk about improvisation, that's exactly what we're concerned with, not the relationship between affective and cognitive, but between psychomotor, on the one hand, and both the affective and cognitive, on the other hand. And that's the problem that nobody seems to have a language to talk about, though it may be more possible to talk about it in respect to a specific subject matter, such as literature, for instance, rather than abstractly. I guess the only people who know anything about it, really, are actors and coaches.

GEOFFREY SUMMERFIELD: It certainly struck me as interesting that there is this folklore. It symbolizes our tendency to think in terms of dualisms, of mutual exclusives.

BOB ALEXANDER: I'd like to make one point. I really implore you not to make the mistake of thinking in terms of mysticism and mystique. I feel that a lot of people do this. This has nothing to do with mystique. It just reveals a non-understanding about what we're doing. And that's why gatherings like this are very, very difficult to communicate to, because you just handle words. I can tell you what happens to a child, and where the child was and everything. All those things I can say, but yet, if the people who have never done it, or have never participated in an ongoing workshop, unless they have done it they really don't know what I'm talking about. It's really hard, it's not intangible, it's really there, but it's there in an experiental way. Many students of ours, and teachers, have been asked by their supervisors to explain what had happened in a three-day workshop and they all say they cannot. And this happens over and over and over again. They are not unwilling and they are not incapable, but they just cannot put what has happened to them in their total body, life, mind, everything, into words. What we did yesterday was not an accident. I believe that we must get deeper into contact so that when we do communicate, it's not on a word to word, ear to ear, head to head level, but it's on a total, a real total level. And when I talk, on terms of, you know, love, everybody says, "Oh, you're mushy and sentimental," I know what I mean, and I think everybody else knows what that word means in his own personal life. Why can't we get involved with ourselves with that level of our existence, Eli? When I speak about the work that I do, it's not general at all, it's highly self-disciplined, very specifically structured, very deep, second to second, involvement with a fellow human being, in which the interaction goes back and forth on a very deep level of living and existing. Those that have worked know that to be true. And I would like to just say one more thing, which occurred to me after coffee. We have a lot of time, you know, those of us who work, we work at our jobs, and we have children, and we're trying to change things because we really want to, because we feel deeply about it, but we have all the time in the world. A child in school has no more time. He doesn't have time yesterday, it's too late, already. I don't want us to do the same thing that the white establishment is doing to the blacks, saying, wait another year. It is easy to say, wait another year when that day-to-day year of life isn't really affecting you. But you can't say that to a child in school. Wait another five years and we'll make your life better. We have scratched off hundreds of thousands of seven-year olds, knowing that they are lost to the world, already when they're seven years old. I'm just asking you, not to get mushy or sentimental, but just to get touched. To get moved by the plight of the child. So, all I'm asking you to do is be touched as human beings, and get involved in your own emotional life. There's nothing wrong with emotionalism. That's what it's all about. And then please get angry. Please be alive enough to get angry about conditions which we feel angry about because once you get angry you will be responsible for your anger and you'll do something about it, in a very loud, strong, intense way. Maybe we can't change the school systems, but that's what they said 30 years ago when they said, "You can't fight City Hall," but we know that we can. And the youth knows that they can change the school system, because in the last two years they have, very, very radically changed a lot of the institutions where the adults now are thinking twice and listening to these foolish, no-planned, no-organization people. So I think it can be changed, but it must be changed out of the passion of being a human being, and not get all scientifically bogged down with worrying about proof that improvisation works. I would like for us to talk on that level. And also about the specifics, but please don't use the word "mystique" to me. It infuriates me. It's not true. It is not true and it shows that you don't know what the hell my work is about. And that's fine, you can't know, because you haven't been involved with me, but then, don't jump to the other extreme and say, "This is what I get from your talking." Because you don't know.

ELI BOWER: You say I can't know what you know unless I've had your experience. How would I ever find out?

JIM HOETKER: That's mystical by definition, Bob.

BOB ALEXANDER: You can't know. Yes, yes, you've been in a workshop and... Have you ever been to a class where we've taught improvisation to the kids?

ELI BOWER: You've put me off immediately. You're saying...

BOB ALEXANDER: O. K. then forget that. Don't accuse the work, don't make a value judgment on the work and don't make it a "mystique."

ELI BOWER: What I'm saying, to you is, let's think beyond the fact that it's your experience and that it's something that has happened to you and see whether or not it can't be translated on a basis where a lot of people can pick it up, not just a basis of "It's something that I felt and unless you feel it, you won't know it."

BOB ALEXANDER: No, no.

ELI BOWER: Well, I get that feeling.

BOB ALEXANDER: No, no. We've always said for years that this can be taught. We've trained teachers. I'm not saying I've found the god, I've found the truth. Just in our experience it's worked, and I say that it can be imparted.

ELI BOWER: I know it's working Bob, but I just want to push you to the point where you go beyond this, and say what are the elements of this? What is the substance of it?

CHARLES SUHOR: I'd like to inhabit that middle ground that you were talking about before a little, and pose a question. If this is fundamentally a matter of eliciting human responses, if it's fundamentally a matter of deepening interpersonal relationships, then is not a teacher who actually generates a very healthy relationship in her class through traditional means--through class discussions, as I was talking about yesterday, in which a genuine sense of play pervades--isn't this teacher fundamentally achieving the goals that you're achieving through quite overtly physical contact? There are physical elements in such a discussion, you know, quite often. And an intense personal involvement, it seems to me. Now, if this teacher is substantially achieving the humanizing goals of improvisation, (and there may be a beautiful improvisation of ideas in such a class) this brings up a question about the technique of improvisation. The only way that such a teacher could profitably use the technique would be for utilitarian purposes, to show the student a little more about how a dramatist works. And we get to this question "Can this be a utilitarian thing?" Can we use it to aid us in teaching drama and helping the student to understand the experience of a playwright? I know that's two questions, and sort of a lopsided operation, but, I think traditional teachers can get some beautiful things going in the way of a play-oriented discussion, and I wonder how they could use improvisation. It would be a redundancy to achieve a sense of play. Could they then use improvisation merely as a technique for the teaching of drama? Or is that immoral, or something?

BOB ALEXANDER: Absolutely. Because that would be an interpretation of the play. You know the reason we don't talk about a play is because we want the student to experience what the character in the play is going through and living so that he understands organically the life of another human being, which cannot happen in a verbal, intellectual discussion. We're talking about literature as an open ended subject. There's no one interpretation of any piece of writing or play. To find out what the play is about you have to experience it totally. That's why improvisation is better than good old-fashioned discussion and is catching on in the world rapidly.

CHARLES SUHOR: Now we're in the area of genre, aren't we? I mean you are using this as a means of teaching drama, are you not?

BOB ALEXANDER: We are using it to teach drama, poetry, to teach literature, because you experience the subject matter, vocally, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Rather than just sitting and talking about ideas.

VIOLA SPOLIN: I wasn't going to speak at all today because I thought I had taken enough time yesterday. But I would like to say one thing. You all saw the demonstration. I would like you to think about the fact that there were a thousand children in there we'd met for the very first time; we were stuck with an end stage as against an arena stage. Would you or would you not say that those children all walked out after that hour a little different than when they came in? Now, I'm sorry that in this hour we didn't do more, so you could see more. But that experience should have showed you something. Not to say that one thing is invalid or that the other is valid. All things work. There are many roads to God as they say, and any one you take is all right, just so you're on the way. And you, the teacher, will be the guide in the jungle and not the great dispenser of truth and literature and education. You know there is an old story about the rabbi who taught with pain. He would go around with a pin and everytime a kid would make a mistake he got a pin. And everytime he was right he got a pinch on the seat. Now we're trying to turn it over and say, "Why can there not be a profound experience in joy? Why cannot there be learning and joy, which means an open human being receiving?" Whatever works use it. And if you are open to your student, he's open to you. If your techniques work use them. If they don't, throw them out.

DON GARDNER: I'm going to be very ordinary, but I think I can show you some joy, the kind of thing we're talking about. We'll pass these pictures around. I think if you look at some of them they are suggestive of the kind of thing that is going on in some Providence elementary schools and in some libraries around Rhode Island and in some communities in any kind of a big room--it doesn't matter. Someone asked where improvisation was happening. Well, I don't know where else it is happening but it is happening in Rhode Island. An organization called the Looking Glass Theatre was formed about five years ago and to begin with, they prepared productions in which the children would sit around on the floor, about 200 to 250 of them, with various walkways open through them so that actors could act in these walkways amongst the children. And then in various ways the children could participate in a performance. I think that this is the way that improvisation began to get into the school system in Providence. On a contractual basis Looking Glass Theatre went out into communities, groups of parents or PTA's or any kind of community organization decided that they would like to have this group come in and perform for the children and to some extent have the children participate with them. From this a library show was developed, which was a much smaller group and involved much more child participation. Ultimately, six women connected with Looking Glass Theatre, at least one of whom has studied with Viola Spolin, have gone into six Providence elementary schools on a contractual basis. Now in order to do this, administrators had to be hurdled and teachers had to be hurdled, but they were hurdled. As a matter of fact, the supervising principal of these six schools was the person who saw what Looking Glass was doing with kids and what they were proposing to do in classrooms and became convinced of the worth of it; not in terms of any specifics, but just became convinced that this would be, I guess, a joyous educational experience for the kids and he has been the leader in bringing improvisation into these schools. The program in the schools usually involves two women who get things started and eventually all the children in the classroom are participating in the program. I'll just describe one briefly. I've seen two women do a variation on _The Sorcerer's Apprentice_, called _The Sorcerer and His Apprentices_. The Sorcerer appears (one of the women) and begins stirring his brew in the vat before him, his apprentices go to a chest and get out all sorts of horrible things that they have to contribute to the brew. And eventually the children all become apprentices. And come up with things they have to contribute to the brew. I saw a youngster come up with an elephant, very heavily laden with an elephant, which he dumped into the vat. And the Sorcerer suggested that perhaps the vat they had there would not accomodate such a big elephant as this child had, and then asked, "What can we do about it?" And the children themselves came up with the idea that there was a certain elasticity to the vat and it did eventually accomodate the elephant.

This program is new in the schools this year; there are two different kinds of reactions coming from the teachers, whose classes are either enlightened or invaded depending on the teachers's point of view. Some of the teachers are delighted to have these people coming in and I think that they will begin to do more of this in their own classrooms after having seen what these women can do. Others feel that they can't possibly compete, that they're just horribly inadequate as far as this is concerned, and these are the people that are going to have to be worked with more than any others. But I think that this is a real start that has been made. Everybody is agreed that the children just love it and that they are expressing themselves and that this is the best kind of education.

JIM HOETKER: Don, just to point out the most ordinary kind of relationship between that and literature teaching. Alan and I saw them doing improvisations on The Canterbury Tales. Doing the "Wife of Bath's Tale" for a bunch of six-year olds. And it was one of the most enjoyable things I've ever seen. I can't help thinking that these kids, when they get to high school, and somebody is going to hand them the Prologue, they're going to feel differently about it than the average kid does. Just the way it familiarizes kids by injecting things, previews of things, into the kids' cultural experience. In the most simple minded way, this has relevance.

DON GARDNER: May I add to that--and believe me, this is not a contrived story--when Looking Glass was touring a performance of the Canterbury Tales, when they came into the community in Rhode Island in which I live, my kids and wife and I happened to be off in Washington that weekend, so I got in touch with them and said my kids missed it, may I please bring them down to Wickford when the show is down there. So I took my own children, my 7-year old son and my 9-year old daughter, and on the way home, they were arguing over whether or not "The Yeoman's Tale" was better or "The Pardoner's Tale" was better. Now when I was 7 and 9 years old I didn't even know that a Yeoman's or a Pardoner's tale existed. So in addition to the joy that you see here there is some teaching of literature going on there, too.

FATHER WILHELMY: I'd like to address myself to Adrian for a moment because you are the director of the Trinity Square Repertory Theatre, and you at times have to bring literature into the theatre.

ADRIAN HALL: We don't put it exactly that way. [Laughter] I don't really think that my particular experience here is as applicable as what Don is telling you about. We deal with high school students alone. Not grade school or not on the lower level. The thing that I had found disconcerting and strange about this talk the last couple of days is that there seems to be some kind of question of whether or not we accept the value of improvisation. And our experience is not applicable here because we have accepted that about 6 or 8 years ago in Rhode Island, and indeed have been working with it for a number of years. We can tell you many fine stories of things that have happened and are happening. It seems to me that what you must do here is just to decide, is improvisation useful in your particular circumstance and you either accept it or reject it. And if you do accept it, if for instance you saw Viola's demonstration yesterday, and you were not moved by that, and you felt resistance to that, my advice to you is, don't accept it. Get right in there and teach Macbeth line by line.

If you do accept it, let's move on to where the problems really are, which is that bridge between the improvisation itself and what we in the theatre call the text or the actual literature. In the last couple of years we have had, as a theatre company and as theatre poeple, some very interesting experiences with this particular thing of the text as opposed to an original thing that comes right from the source of the actor.

Last year we were invited to the Edinburgh Festival, invited to take the company with the play we had performed in Providence. We did, and there we encountered some companies around the world and one of the most interesting companies we encountered there--it's run by a man named Jerry Grotowski from Poland--was called The Polish Laboratory Theatre. It was literally a catharsis for me and for the members of our company, as well as the designing staff, to really see how far they've gone toward a theatre that is a theatre of event and not a theatre, as we say, of literature. If anything it might be a theatre of anti-text. And how far the theatre is going in that direction! And so then coming back this year when we began to work; we began to work in a way that we had not worked before. One of the things that we did was a play that was based on a poem that Robert Penn Warren had written called "Brother to Dragons"--some of you may be familiar with that long narrative poem. We found that by some of the--forgive me if I consider it the Grotowski Principle, which as of yesterday I may say now is the Spolin Principle--with certain kinds of spontaneous game play we were able to create a theatre event out of this text that was really quite startling and quite a marvelous thing.

As Bob has pointed out, we have used improvisation in the theatre for years and years and years. When I first went into the theatre, improvisation was very much a way of opening up an actor. Sometimes when you're working on new material a certain kind of improvisation can lead you to actual dialogue which you can incorporate into things and so on. Working with what has become or what we consider our great American playwrights, for instance working with an author like Tennessee Williams, for instance, I've been shocked to find out how much these people have been able to take from the performer in making their script come alive. So those are not two entirely different things. So consequently the time may come, the time may come when in the theatre we absolutely do not deal with literature, when we do not know what literature is. I just finished work on a Shakespeare play. I am here to tell you that within the next 10 or 12 years, we are not going to be able to deal with the dreary, archaic, political and social ideas that the business man brings to the theatre. That does not say that there isn't a wealth of beautiful, gorgeous, psychological and humanistic things in those plays, but if you think the restoration of a happy monarch to any country is a solution, you are just out in another era.

What you must face here in this conference is, first of all, whether in your particular case improvisation is worth working with or isn't worth working with. If it is worth working with then begin to examine that next step, which is, what does it have to do with literature, and let us look honestly and coldly at it and not hang back with those 19th century times.

JIM HOETKER: Adrian, let me repeat a question I asked a few minutes ago. About "Brother to Dragons." I once tried to teach that poem, and I was absolutely unsuccessful in doing it. I watched Adrian's production of this thing, with kids, and he succeeded in teaching it as well as Warren could have ever wanted it taught. They dug it. So you are a teacher. You're also teaching your actors. Consider the actors going through the experience of building this play, of creating it; what are they learning that will transfer, what are they learning that will make them better for you the next time they are in a play, the next time that this situation comes up? And then what could the teachers do? What can you do with The Wasteland to make this sort of thing out of it?

ADRIAN HALL: You have to be very careful of that thing of beginning to put down rules, that's the thing that Viola kept speaking about and Bob kept speaking about. The theatre is simpler because we do have certain things that we have to adhere to. Nobody ever talks about the possibility of theatre experience without actors or without audience. Those two seem to be necessary ingredients. Though you are in education you're able to speak about schools where the student doesn't go to the school, we don't have that kind of possibility in the theatre, you see. Because that event cannot occur until there's an audience and there are actors. So, therefore, the theatre is less complex than this educational-thing. What do actors learn? Many of them, I think you could say very truthfully, learn nothing. Many of them, you can say that person is more open and more receptive and is more in tune himself. It's a phrase that I use a lot, that we all throw around a lot, for an actor's getting in touch with himself is very, very important. Maybe you can say by that experience, that experience in "Brother to Dragons," in which it was created entirely from the performers or the people there, and then finally we were able to wed that text with a lot of the things. And what we created was through games and through various things. Just quickly, so you'll understand what I'm talking about. There was a situation, for instance, when a boy sees a girl for the first time, this is in Kentucky in 1810 or 1812. Mr. Penn Warren had suggested in his poem that it was at some kind of social event of the frontier era. Then we find what social events went on. Well, there was square dancing and so on. There was certain kinds of behavior that has not been explored about frontier people. About all we know is the few things that Agnes DeMille has taught us. That cowboys stand with bow legs, and the girls all have sun bonnets that move in certain kinds of ways. We thought perhaps there was real behavior, that, say, an artistocratic Virginian of that time would engage in. Perhaps he would look differently. He must! There's a difference in sitting on a Duncan Phyfe chair and sitting on a split rail, right? There's a difference; you ought to try that. So if that difference existed, how did we get to that? We tried various things; at one time I was very involved in this corn husking or the house raising in which everybody came together and they actually constructed a house out in the wilderness. Well, that was possible on the stage, but we felt that it would involve too much. The corn thing got to be very exciting; it worked, except that finally the designer said to me, "Adrian, if we continue with this corn we'll use like two bushels of corn every night." So finally one day somebody said, "Let's bob for apples." We did know that there was a game that was done in the frontier; so we brought on a tub with water, with apples and everyone began to participate, that was like a marvelous kind of fun and excitement and we were able to extend that to the audience like the people on stage would run into the audience and give the audience an apple and say, "Can you hit the barrel?" and so the audience pariticpated in that also. And then there was a timing thing in which the men would actually dump themselves in and actually try to pick up the apple. Well, that became the solution to the problem. So then what we did with that game was marry that to the text. For instance, the heroine simply said, "The first time I saw Lilburn was at such-and-such." And out would come the tub and the apples and the audience loved it and applauded it and so forth. That was just one of the many things that was done through improvisation there.

So, in the smallest state of these United States we have a long time ago accepted the real value of improvisation; we've accepted it in the theatre as a tool toward helping the actor, extending the actor, opening the actor; we've accepted it as a way of finding actual things for the text itself. We've accepted it on all those levels. We also have this on the elementary school level, on which there's real work there.

BOB ALEXANDER: I think it's important that they know, the rest of the room knows, that when we talk about opening up an actor it's not so that we're talking about an actor being sensitive, it's not so much that he should know himself, it's so that he becomes affected by everything that happens around him and then responds to it. The openness is only so that he may be affected. So when Viola says to be involved, you get involved only to the affected. Improvisation is marvelous for that.

ADRIAN HALL: Right, right.

BRIAN HANSEN: I'd like to respond to that. It seems to me, I find what Adrian says exactly to the point. We spend a great deal of time questioning the ends of education and the ends of the teaching of literature in the United States and these are the continuing problems of everyone in this room. I suspect that there is no one in this room who is here because he is completely satisfied with education. We're all dissatisfied, we're all looking for a new way. I would also suspect that most of the people in this room, perhaps all the people in this room, if they are not committed to the value of improvisation at least have an open mind. Now to the point: the question is, if we have this technique, and I'm going to refer to it as a technique although I know the word has a pejorative sense, if we have this technique, which is called improvisation--and Adrian said, "Take it or leave it."--the question is, why should we take it? It seems to me that you can start to get after that problem in terms of an individual discipline like literature and the teaching of literature, exploration of literature, fairly quickly. First of all, two major problems. The first one is that it has been fairly well established, certainly by all research, that it is very difficult for a person to get down to a task, especially a group task, until he has resolved some of the tensions that he has with the remainder of the group. This is something we very seldom pay attention to in classrooms, but it happens to be the case. We face the kids all in one way so that they can't interact with one another and they spend a lot of time wrestling out role interactions and self-discovery, when they could be paying attention to geography, or whatever. It seems to me that the improvisational approach, as Bob has beautifully stated, is a marvelous way of getting at a reduction of these socio-psychological problems that prevent kids from learning. And it seems to me that it ought to be explored; but it ought to be explored as only one weapon in a whole arsenal of weapons, including sensitivity training and all the rest. And that's one of our problems. When we resolve that area, and then we can move into the task dimension. And here I'd like to introduce a concept. The concept of efficiency. It seems to me it's been lurking there under all the things we've been doing here. If there's any drive in a human being, it's the drive to get to the goals the best and easiest and simplest and most beautiful way possible. And I think that's a definition of efficiency. One of the things, it seems to me, that we can do with improvisation is to make breakthroughs in methods. Let me illustrate. I don't see any reason, if you, for example, are teaching a short story and you want to get the kids really involved with the short story--you might improvise a short story, you might do a number of things--but there is no reason, it seems to me, why you should improvise every single short story you're going to deal with, eventually you want to wean the kid so that he can, in fact, make some kind of direct contact with the literature. Another way. Don Rock and I were talking last night and we said, well, maybe individual techniques that Viola spelled out for us could be used, and we explored the idea of using one of the most popular and yet one of the apparently silly ones--the gibberish exercise--in terms of literature. Let me propose a way of doing this. If you're teaching poetry, one of the problems of teaching poetry, particularly in the classroom is that when it's read, and I mean by the student or the teacher, it is usually read so badly that the kid thinks it sounds awful. But what if, after a gibberish exercise you say, "All right, now paraphrase the poem in gibberish." This would force him to concentrate on rhyme, meter, phrasing, the vitality and the sound of his voice, completely disassociated from the verbals involved. Now I think that this would be a valuable breakthrough for the student. The student could start off with very simple things, The "Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," and work up to something that is rather more complicated that you have to work with. To my mind, that is a way of exploring a kind of problem using an individual technique suggested by Viola.

BOB ALEXANDER: Do you think it is more important for them to learn poetry that already exists or is it more important for them to create their own poetry?

BRIAN HANSEN: Both!

WALLY SMITH: What he is saying here is, what do you want the kids to do when you get finished with it? Do you want them to react and have the changes that Viola worked with yesterday or do you want them to read litearature? What do you want them to do? That's part of it.

BRIAN HANSEN: That has to be answered by individual teachers; for me I would say both. And finally coming to the second dimension of this task that I was talking about before. It seems to me that there is a whole area, certainly this is the area that Eli was speaking to directly, which we could call sort of a data tank--the reserves. The facts of our civilization which can be communicated very quickly. It is ridiculous it seems to me to take the idea that the student must learn by doing, which is certainly true--you know, he teaches himself, nobody teaches him, he teaches himself--and overgeneralize it. It's silly not to take as part of the reality principle that he can learn from other people, somebody can lay the news on him, so he doesn't have to go out and burn his hand on radiators, stoves, bonfires, a number of things. You say, look, there's something called heat, baby, and this is it. I deliberately made it silly, because it seems to me that's an extension of the inefficiencies which are, unfortunately, possible in an improvisational approach.

JIM HOETKER: Can I just throw out one thing. One of the large arguments David Ausbel makes in his new book is that the dichotomy that's been made between discovery learning and presentation learning is phony; that the only difference between discovery learning and presentation learning is how you find out what it is you're supposed to learn. In one case, you have to go through an involved process to discover the concept you're supposed to learn, the other hand they give it to you, here it is, it's on this mimeographed sheet, learn it. But once the task is discovered the learning process is identical in the two cases. Is this related to our argument?

ADRIAN HALL: Jim, that's very good, except what happens is that we get a built-in resistance, that's why I find what Viola does so absolutely disarming. We get a built-in resistance on the part of the young people to the being forced to come to this art experience. This funny Polish man that I told you about, Jerry Grotowski, says this, "Spend your time just knocking down barriers, trying to get through the barriers that the actor has created himself by his entire life; just knock down those barriers and then you're going to get to something that is at one time original, and at another time very individual, in that it is whatever you've got is different from whatever I've got." So you're going to get something that is very good. And then the learning thing can begin. But whether you go at it obliquely or go at it directly, still the important thing is whether you're going after the same thing. But that could very well be, but that road directly--boy!--is very hard to get to in our contemporary world.

BOB ALEXANDER: What happens if you tell an actor the result that you both know? The actor knows what the part is supposed to be at the end plus the actor says he thought that six months before he was cast. The way an actor works on a role is that he discovers it himself and he comes to a result and it may be the same result that everybody said at the beginning, what is that man's behavior, but he discovers it himself so that when he behaves it's organic, it's not imposed. What happens to the internal life of that human being?

VIOLA SPOLIN: You can have some meaningful dialogue between director and actor.

ELI BOWER: But you're imposing something from your frame of reference on others. You're saying here's a system, say, mathematics. It has certain functions and certain inherent symbolic relationships. It is one of the greatest abstractions man has developed. But you have to adopt this symbol system if you're going to use it. You could use it creatively, as Einstein did, or you can...

BOB ALEXANDER: You can discover it, too.

ELI BOWER: If you have 170 years, you see, you can discover a lot of things.

BOB ALEXANDER: Mathematics is...

ELI BOWER: You remember that little workshop we had...Just listen.

BOB ALEXANDER: But I have to talk back, right?

ELI BOWER: Talk back. But don't interrupt. [Laughter] The little exercise that was done in the mathematics in the use of symbols. There was a little game called equations which were played; the way that you play equations is that you take the symbols, you take the numbers, you take the signs, you take certain conditions, you try to put them together in a game situation, in such a way that you learn how to use these various facets of the symbol system and you play it out as a team. The people who become proficient in it get to play those who are proficient on the other team, and the people who are not get to play those down here. The way you win the game, of course, is the people who are at the bottom rung have the highest scores. The only way to get to win the game is to help the people on your own team understand what the dynamics of this little system consists of, because if you win up here, your score is minimal compared to a win down at the bottom rung. What happens is the whole orientation of the relationship changes, instead of worrying about beating your opponent you begin to be concerned with how do you take this knowledge that you have and use it in a helping relationship, because there is certain specific kinds of efficiency in winning this kind of a game. In mathematics they discover it quickly. This is not something that is going to change, it is not something that is inherent in the individual, there are not infinite different possibilities; the end possibilities are very, very constricted. And the game ends at a certain point in this, just as in any type of symbol system, including language, by the way. There are certain kinds of possibilities. I don't want you to use words that I have had different experiences with, but there are certain degrees of freedom. But I don't want you to start using words more or less in terms of your own meaning. That constricts us to some degree, doesn't it?

VIOLA SPOLIN: Can I say one thing. The purpose of discovery, when it really happens, is the willingness on the part of the one who has discovered to look into those who have equally discovered and view their views. I know when I was a young art teacher I heard, "Viola, America's been discovered a long time ago." In other words if I discover something, get excited about something, then I want to know what everybody's thinking on that subject. Then I go back to it because I was awakened to something I'd never seen before and then I go into the other disciplines; I go to the men who've spent a life time thinking about it. Who are we to say this or this? And then they give back to me, not what I know, but that which I sense is the way to go so that we may evolve from this lower state, perhaps. And discovery is our only way to be ready to receive the teachings of others. Not just their mouthings.

ADRIAN HALL: That's it. Are they going to accept that or not accept that? That's what we're talking about. Exactly what she said right there. If we accept that then we must resolve that we accept improvisation.

BETTY EGEDY: I have found this year that I myself as well as my students have discovered more in senior English since I've used, and I say "used" in quotes, improvisations than my students in former years. There are several things I'd like to say and a few questions I'd like to ask as a teacher. The efficiency in my classroom as far as the discovery is concerned has been much greater this year. I feel that the use of improvisation has been a good experience this year for two different reasons: to allow the students and teachers to know each other, the students to know one another better. In addition, I have also used improvisations as a way into various programs that I wanted my students to enter into. They have in turn discovered much more than I have attempted in former years. Even, if you want to mention that term grammar, you have to teach students how to write, they have to know that there is sentence variation. I have struggled for years to try to teach them how to use phrases and clauses--you know what I did the other day because some of them had not learned it? I kicked over a waste basket, I threw a piece of chalk to a student in the classroom. I found myself improvising, I had not done this before. I'd been to the workshop last summer. Now what happened--I told my students to write what they saw happen in the classroom. Some of the students who'd been saying, I don't know the difference between a phrase and a clause, I don't know how to express myself in a sentence, actually did, they felt successful and I was pleased, they were happy, as is well.

CHARLES SUHOR: I think that we all accept improvisation, I think we're all deeply impressed by what we saw yesterday. The question I'm trying to get at and we seem to be evolving toward an answer to it is what are we to accept it as. If we're to accept improvisation as a means of improving inter-personal relationships, it seems to me that we have to recognize the individual differences among our teachers and recognize that some teachers have other ways, very good ways, of evolving these fine inter-personal relationships. And we needn't mess with improvisation with them. If we're going to accept it, on the other hand, as a technique which is used for the teaching of drama and which can illuminate the dramatist's experience in a way that no other technique can, then it certainly should be a part every English teacher's arsenal of teaching techniques. I frankly don't think we're going to get any place if we get into this area of arguing about whether it's a good method of making people beautiful. I think that's a moot question which results in philosophical squabbles. It's the kind of thing that brought about the argument about mystique, which I'm afraid I'm guilty of bringing into the conference in the first place. I think we can really profit some if we talk about this as a technique for teaching drama, which is a strangely humanizing technique. And then we can have fun with it, and I can learn something about how to make the study of drama much more exciting.

FATHER WILHELMY: O.K., fine. Ann.

SISTER ANN MICHELLE: For a long time I've just been sitting here wondering really what the question under discussion was, because I admit I have been lost in quite a few of the discussions. But, I would like to say that my background is not in education courses, I've got a background in a few areas in the humanities and about the only statistic I have at hand is that the kids I come in contact with watch 18,500 hours of TV by the time they're 18 and they spend 15,000 hours in the classroom. This is according to Marshall McLuhan. I would like to relate to you what I have seen happen in my own classroom using improvisation. One kid who was ready to go out and buy her own leather jacket and motorcycle, and for whom the only good thing about school was the 3:00 dismissal bell, really began to like what we were doing. I could see a difference in her whole attitude toward herself and toward other people. I don't want to get philosophical about this or psychological because I think that's a whole other point. I also realize that we are responsible for what we teach, and that the reception of a person depends a great extent on the disposition of the receiver, and all those kinds of things. I just know as a teacher that improvisation with poetry, with a short story, with the Scarlet Letter, really does something in my classroom. The kids like it and I like it.

ELI BOWER: What do you do? That's what we want to know.

SISTER ANN MICHELLE: Well, after we have read the Scarlet Letter...do you want me to say this now?

ELI BOWER: This is the kind of thing that interests me.

SISTER ANN MICHELLE: After we had read the Scarlet Letter we spent a day just drawing out various themes, what guilt does to a person, we didn't write it into sentences even. Just "guilt can destroy a person, revenge makes a person bitter," we listed about 8 or 10 or 12 things, I don't remember. Then the kids went home that night and thought of an improvisation in a contemporary setting that would illustrate this. So we came to the class the next day and they conducted their own improvisations, asking kids to volunteer to be such and such. "Now this is what I'd like to show and I'd like you to take part here, and you be doing this and this is what I want to get across. I want to show that seeking revenge destroys a person." This is what we did.

FATHER WILHELMY: Maybe I could clarify that initial question regarding the substance of our discussion so far. It seems to me that the question has boiled down to this: How do we marry the game to the task, or how do we apply the technique to drama? What we are addressing ourselves to here today is: How do we use the technique to illuminate literature.

WALLY SMITH: May I ask this question? Presuming that you're teaching literature and that's what you want the students to do, I'm back on that hangup again, what do you want the students to do in the course of literature. Do you want them to read the literature and enjoy literature as an art? Using the evidence that you were talking about here, the students are doing that. Are they going out and reading books? Are they going to enjoy literature or are they just having fun doing what you're doing in your class? Can you tell us what those things are? How do you know they're doing things?

SISTER ANN MICHELLE: I know because they're talking about it and they never did this before. They're talking about what they are learning. They're talking about what these men in early American literature thought, what they did in their society, and what's happening in our society that reflects that. I want them to be interested in literature and I want to develop in them an interest in the subject. I'm not interested in filling them in with a lot of facts because when they are interested they're going to learn the facts.

WA'LY SMITH: Are they doing that? Are they reading literature, or are they doing this just because they're in a class at that particular time?

SISTER ANN MICHELLE: What do you mean by literature? Are you talking about...

WALLY SMITH: Well, let me go through an article here that might be able to clarify this. I read an article just early this week, Sunday or Monday, by a teacher of English who's saying, "What's wrong with teaching reading literature?" After all, literature is an art and people read it. Now it seems to me, to some extent, to be a disservice to a literary artist, to say, we have to do something to your stuff, we have to gussy it up, we have to prance around with it, before it really becomes worth anything to students. It doesn't really mean anything as literature until we perform it, jump over tables, fight with swords, and things of this sort. And until we do something with it, like that, it's not literature. What I'm talking about, I suppose, is that literature, it seems to me, and you people may deny this--you're more expert in it than I am--literature is really something that has been written and printed, you read it on pages or whatever form it is. And that is an act of art in itself. Are we saying that that is such a poor thing in our society that we have to do a whole lot of other things to it in order to make that possible? What I'm asking for is what data do we have that the students are actually reading literature because they do this or are we saying the kids are having fun in our classes, they're opened up people, they're relating better, they like it. Or are we saying they're actually reading literature. Let me illustrate that a little further. If you're teaching literature you must go beyond just experiencing. There is something else. They must be reading literature. You have proof that they are doing that?

NORMAN GEVANTHOR: I think the next step, if they're that turned on, by exploring all the contemporary life through the different themes, the next step that is possibly to say, here's a book that talks about the same thing, written by this man, read it and see what you think of it. Whether it's happening or not, we don't have a measuring device for that.

BERNARD BECK: We may not have any information on that directly, we have some other kind of information which is very peculiar and suggests something and that is that television leads these people to read. Well, if television can get people to read, if television can have that effect, which is not about anything related to the thing or anything of the sort, it's reasonable to expect that anything that turns people on leads them to read.

ELI BOWER: When you're talking about literature, though, you must ask "read what?"

BERNARD BECK: The difficulty I have with what Norman just said is, what if after going through this kind of discovery, nobody up and says, "Now here is a guy who's writing about the same thing." The response could very reasonably be, I think mine would be, "I'd rather do it this way than have to wade through some crummy book." If he's talking about the same thing I am, then I'm talking about the same thing he is.

NORMAN GEVANTHOR: I'll rephrase the question. What's the difference between the way he did it and you do it? In the book, the characters in the book?

BERNARD BECK: That's interesting. In my crummy book, they'll get turned off and they'll know it's a crummy book, and if it's an exciting book then they'll go right through. Right? But the first thing he has to believe is that it is even worth his time, that this very suggestion that getting it through the literary medium is even in the same ballpark with doing it this way. In other words, it's not a question of what is the concept and the substance of literature and what do you know--it turned out to be the same thing when we leap around the room. Not just the substance, but is the substance there in a form that any reasonable man should bother with? Now the answer a lot of learned men have made through the ages is that's a sublime form of getting at it. But if that's so there's something about the form which has to be learned. Now what I'm convinced of, that first point which has been stated in many different ways by many different people here, is that when people get opened up, their natural curiosity, their natural thirst to learn comes out. In a sense, you don't have to get people to read, students to read, you don't have to get them to do anything. What you have to do essentially, I think, what we call good teaching, progressive teaching, enlightened teaching, is not so much a matter of opening up new doors as carrying away the bric-a-brac and obstacles that the rest of the system has put in the way of the student. What Bob started out with and was a very important point and we've gotten away from it, is what every one of us knows in his heart, school is a drag, and the best schools and the best teachers are those who lighten the load. So coming back to this question (it seemed to occupy us for quite a while here in the middle hours), there are two kinds of people here. School people who said, does improvisation have any value here? And the improvisation people, whom I hear saying, do the schools deserve it? [Laughter] One of the salutary effects that I think all these experiments have, if nothing else, is that they lighten the load, at least for some part of the day that student is allowed to be alive. And if for no other reason that makes him a better student. Because just the very hard reality principles of fatigue, school is fatiguing, it is psychologically and physiologically fatiguing. And you ought to know because you've just been spending two days doing something like school and we're all fatigued. We've all been sitting here in chairs, and a lot of talk, and not enough action, looking at papers and so forth, that's physiologically and psychologically fatiguing. The part of the advantage of doing the games, of doing improvisational technique, is the same as having yard recess, that kind of thing. And is not to be sneered at. It is much better than yard recess, it's more fun.

WALLY SMITH: How do you know when they're opened up and ready to go into the...

VIOLA SPOLIN: How do you know when a cake is done?

DON GARDNER: As a school man who sees value in improvisation, can I point out to you improvisation men that you don't wade through a good book, you glide through a good book. [Applause]

VIOLA SPOLIN: I think there is lurking here a puritanical resistance to play as being something that one should not do. This is not so, because true play is highly disciplined. Highly disciplined, because if you do not follow the structure and the rules that you can later break, enlarge, enlarge, enlarge, there is no fun, no one can play with you, you don't even know what you're doing. The kid who plays, the adult who plays, must be constantly in interaction with another human being, his joy is in the other.

CHARLES SUHOR: But granting the play is good our problem still is, how do we marry the game to the task?

JIM HOETKER: Let me make this one point. Traditionally what we think of as good teaching--you know, the master teacher--is a guy who is playing, only he's doing it. Kids are sitting there as audience and they're being entertained, they're being amused, they're being turned on; and he is teaching by his personal example, he's having fun interacting with a poem or something. He tries to turn on a kid that way. We're talking about turning it around and letting everybody play along with the teacher, which isn't usually what happens because it's noisy. And the teacher is a better performer than the kids are, and he loves to listen to himself talk. He enjoys his own performance better than he enjoys the kids' performance. That's what usually goes on and with some people it works, beautifully. You can turn kids on this way and teach them this way. We're talking about an alternative that possibly does additional things, does other things as well. I think this is where we're getting.

MIKE RAYMOND: Let me just say something, I tend to oversimplify things. I think we're playing around with a lot of theory and stuff. I teach speech at Mt. Carmel Academy here in New Orleans. So I'm not playing around with literature so much, except in the sense of plays.

I have a feeling, we're sitting here trying to figure out the volume of this cup by mathematical means when we can just take and fill it with water and pour it into a measuring cup. There are five teachers, six teachers at this table, I know them well enough, we worked in improvisation during the summer. I know them well enough that I can make this statement for all of them: you want to find out, ask our kids when we're not around. Come to my school anytime, watch my class, talk to my kids outside of class when I'm not around, talk to other kids who took my course last year and compare it. There are some who'd taken last year's course when I had no idea of what this stuff was and some who've taken this year's course, ask them what they think about it. Ask the kids of these other teachers, there are 25 teachers in New Orleans area that took this workshop during the summer, ask these kids, not by questionnaire, but on a person to person basis and ask other kids why maybe don't have teachers who are using improvisation. And then compare. See what they want. We brought this up yesterday. See what the kids want, see how they feel about it.

ELI BOWER: I know the next question. "They may be enjoying themselves and having a good time, but are they learning anything?"

VIOLA SPOLIN: What do you want, people who read Moby Dick, or people who feel alive?

ALAN ENGELSMAN: I'd like to go back to what Mr. Suhor said. We all have accepted improvisation. Let's not spend any more time trying to defend it, trying to say it's good. We've accepted it! He asked, "What have we accepted it as?" Now, I feel that there is a dichotomy right there concerning what we've accepted it as. Bob Alexander represents one point of view, he says, "Improvisation is it, it is education," he says, "Let's throw out the rest of the school and do improvisation."

BOB ALEXANDER: I never said that. That's what happens when you only have a half hour to speak instead of four days.

ALAN ENGELSMAN: Okay. What I'm saying is that you and Wally are saying improvisation is a thing in itself, it is not a tool, it is a thing in itself that is something that is a matter of your experiencing something. You can't do it unless you do it, and let's not tie it directly to literature. It is the theatre, it is not a tool. There are other people here who are saying it is a tool. I'm going to take the middle ground, I'm going to say that it is a thing in itself and it belongs in the English class as a thing in itself. A hundred years ago English consisted of reading, writing, spelling and penmanship. Twenty years ago we threw out spelling and penmanship, and we said English consists of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. We didn't like that, so we turn around and say, no it's only reading, writing and language. We keep trying to come up with new names here. I'm saying that maybe what we need to do is say that improvisation is something in itself, and it belongs in the English curriculum as a thing by itself, as something which is involved with these same goals that literature has and as writing has that Ruth pointed out to us at the very beginning. We need to appreciate, whatever that means, to live vicariously, to gain insight into human experiences. And I say that it maybe belongs as a separate sub-discipline of English. But that doesn't mean that it can't be used as a tool or a corollary to the teaching of literature or to the teaching of writing or wherever else it fits in. But let's recognize that it does exist as an entity in itself. Maybe if there's anything that comes out of this conference, it's a matter of our giving our expertise and our credentials to the fact that we accept improvisation as something more than it has been accepted as before: As being an entity that can be in some way used both as a tool and as an end in itself.

JUNIUS EDDY: It seems to me that we're really tying ourselves down by talking either/or, and I think when people are talking about "both/and" they are on the track. We were talking before about a poem and Bob said, "Do you want them to learn about a poem or write their own," and Brian said, "Both." And that's the point.

[*At this point, a break was taken for lunch. When the group reassembled Geoffrey Summerfield was introduced, to speak on the uses of drama and improvisation in British schools.*]

GEOFFREY SUMMERFIELD: I'm going to try to deal both with improvisation-in-English and with improvisation-in-drama in England. First of all I'd like to clear the ground by trying to explain something of the complex relationships between the two subjects, English and drama, as pursued, but never caught, in England. Some of our larger comprehensive high schools, with about 1500 or 2000 students, have separated off drama and English as independent parts of the curriculum taught by different teachers, quite unrelated to each other, and regarded by the students as unrelated.

Now this kind of separation would have been a great deal more common, I think, if there had been a greater supply of teachers of drama to the schools. Unfortunately, many of the most creative and talented people in drama look at the school teachers and say, "Well, I don't want to join them!" Again most of our teachers in drama are people who've majored in drama either in the college of education or university and are women who are lost to their profession through marriage and children almost immediately after graduation.

In terms of teacher supply, this is preposterous and ridiculous. In terms of the relationship between English and drama the result is paradoxically beneficial, since schools have been unable to establish autonomous drama departments because the drama teachers are just not to be found. English departments, therefore, in most of our high schools have been able to place drama within the context of the total language arts curriculum or what we call the English curriculum. Now, I'd like to discuss briefly what this means both in terms of advantage and disadvantage.

As far as the disadvantages are concerned, what we find generally speaking is that English as a subject is allowed about four and a half hours a week out of the total 25 or 26 contact hours in school. Now this allocation of time is normally available in units of about 40 minutes. So, when considering the place of drama in his curriculum, his total curriculum, the teacher of English-and-drama, hyphenated, has to weigh his demands on time against all the other aspects of his total English curriculum. Dare he, for example, allow it to occupy 1/5 of the time available?

Well, his nervousness about so allowing derives from two cultural modifiers, both of which seem to me at the moment very significant. One is the still fairly common mistrust of drama. I think that England is still in many ways a very Philistine country, especially in the provinces, and many school principals still regard drama as a waste of time, as a soft option, as an escape from work. The other cultural modifier is the education of the teacher. Most teachers of English in high school have majored, specifically, in English literature which would include, of course, Anglo-Saxon phonology and morphology and other rather peripheral matters, but not drama as drama. Very few departments of English in our universities offer drama as drama, although I'm pleased to say that the numbers are now slowly increasing. Generally speaking, again, the attitude of the university toward drama has been to regard it as non-academic, as a waste of time, as a soft option, as intellectually disreputable.

Now the result of this is that where drama is an integral part of the work of the English department of the school, it's being taught, as in my case it was taught, by someone who's had little or no training in drama, little or no experience in acting, little or no experience in the pedagogics of drama. In other words, if you like to put it crudely, it's a case of the blind leading the blind. The advantages of having drama as part of English, of the total English curriculum, rather than having it as a separate autonomous department in school, are nevertheless, I think, very considerable.

The most important, I think, is that one can be pragmatic and opportunistic; that is, one can seize the moment in the freedom of flexibility. So the kids' stories, ideas, inquiries, tensions, and so on, can take dramatic form, can be worked out in drama, as and when it is most appropriate for the kids to do so. So something clicks, let's say, in discussion in the English room, and one realizes that this in fact can be explored further through dramatic improvisation; and one can immediately switch into dramatic improvisation as part of one's on-going English work. Similarly, the imaginative realization that occurs in drama can, and I think does, feed back into English; I certainly don't want to suggest that drama is not in itself self-consummatory and self-justifying. I want rather simply to state that, in my experience, a reciprocal overflow does in fact occur, that one aspect of the class's activity feeds into and is mutually fed by another. And, of course, the spirit, the liveliness, the physical intensity, the emotional intensity, the attentive intensity, the intensity of-focus of the work in one field, this more readily carries over into other aspects of one's work in the class.

Similarly, the raw materials that work in English with kids of, say, to age 13, will be perception, sensation, memory, immediate experience, immediate feeling; these are precisely what one uses in drama. Just as the disciplines of attentiveness, of sharp awareness, of close observation, of controlled registration, are what one is working for in both fields--both in English as such and in drama as such. To give you just one example of the sort of thing I have in mind, if I may, from last week's experience in Lincoln, Nebraska.

I work most of the time with a grade 6 class; a class made up of black kids, Indians, Spanish-American kids, poor whites and one or two middle class whites. And the week before last I was convinced I had a psychotic child on my hands. Her closest friend, on whom she's emotionally dependent to a degree that I find difficult to comprehend, was away--her father had died on Sunday, so her best friend spent the rest of the week at home attending the funeral and so on and so forth. Dawn therefore was without her prop, without her source of reassurance, her source of intimacy, her source of everything that a really intense friendship provides to a child of 12. Dawn's behavior was, it seemed to me, as near psychotic as makes no matter. She was violent, she was in a state of constant tantrums, one couldn't speak to her; I just couldn't relate with her at all. Last week, I decided that what I wanted to do with these kids was at least an hour a day of dramatic improvisation. Now Dawn, in the previous week had been wild, uncontrollable, and really, in some ways, to an external, detached, objective observer, a positively vicious child. Now all the improvisation that I wanted to do with them was something I'd seen Marcel Marceau do in a film in which he captures a butterfly.

You've probably seen this, with the butterfly net and the extraordinary intensity of his realization of every aspect of this experience--physical, spatial, and emotional. Now I asked for a volunteer, and Dawn, who is in some ways a natural exhibitionist, volunteered to do this. In her mime, she displayed delicacy, gentleness, precision, sensitivity, patience, capacity for self criticism, capacity for self-awareness which one would not have believed existed in that child the week before. I was able to do this, and through my response to it, reestablish some sort of working relationship with this child, and it's not the end of the line, it's the beginning of the line as far as I'm concerned, that through this particular moment in drama she both realized in herself the tenderness, the gentleness, and the delicacy that is there, undeniably there and she also gave me something with which to relate to her.

She also demonstrated to the class what real attentiveness, real concentration, real discipline mean--not in terms of getting down to work, but of actually finding delight and profound satisfaction from this intense involvement in the act. So much, for the moment, about the relationship between English and drama. I don't believe I can do anything useful in English with Dawn until I've reestablished some sort of working relationship with her.

Now I'd like to look at the content of our work in England, in drama specifically, bearing in mind that I shall have to make some fairly broad generalizations. I hope you'll bear with me--they're rather vague, rather broad. For like music, drama was for a very long time, a Cinderella subject in the English high school. The curriculum of a selective high school or grammar school derived from the demands of the examination system right through its history and this was reinforced by the civil service examinations of the 19th century. If a subject could be examined by external public examination, then it was taught, and it was respectable. Unlike drama, music could be examined pretty obviously by asking them to regurgitate The Barber of Seville or to analyze a fugue or whatever, so music found acceptance before drama. The fight for drama as anything more than reading a text around a class, the fight for drama

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as a collaborative, creative activity requiring its own peculiar resources, provisions of space, equipment; the fight for drama as an autonomous, actual, real discipline in its own right, this fight is still going on. We're still fighting it. We're winning, but slowly.

In general, drama traditionally has meant two things in English high schools. First, reading the set books, Julius Caesar, Midsummer Night's Dream--you know them all. Reading the set book, line by line, all the students sitting at their desks preparing for an examination on the set book which will ensure that they have read it line by line. A closed situation. A self-repeating situation, a self-justifying situation. The second aspect of drama in high schools traditionally was the annual school play which was essentially a public relations exercise, the annual sports meeting where parents are allowed into the school to see their off-spring springing. Now occasionally by some strange coincidence the two activities of reading a set play and doing the school play were allowed to coalesce and the set text play was produced as the annual school play. This was known as hypersaturation.

Now, the points that one takes about the situation are that the set play was read by the kids with the teacher in very much the same way as fiction would be read. Secondly, the school play did not represent in any sense the top of an iceberg, an iceberg of much continuous on-going work in drama. The school play was simply produced once a year in the manner of a magician pulling a rabbit from an otherwise empty hat.

Then around--who knows?--twenty, fifteen years ago the climate of opinion began to change. The reasons for such change were probably as much negative, that is, weariness with previous practices, as they were positive, that is the discovery of something more compelling, more satisfying, more worthwhile. My view of the situation is necessarily personal and tentative, but it seems to me that the following aspects are recognizable.

First of all, the emergence of mime at the pedagogical level through the influence of people like Rose Bruford, in the theatre through the influence of people like Marcel Marceau and the Chinese theatre, and most essentially, I think, to people outside the metropolis, the arrival, the availability to teachers of films, of mime in action. I'm thinking particularly of the Marceau films, and the Chinese theatre, whereby one could immediately make available to the kids demonstrations of mime in action by the great exponents.

The second general tendency that I detect, over the past fifteen years, is the gradual democratization of the high school system. Until 1950--this is approximate--the sheep at 11 years old would go to one school, and the goats at 11 years old would go to another--a sort of academic segration as in Waiting for Godot. With well-motivated--that is, the carrot dangling--with well-motivated, responsive, academically-oriented students, you can read plays all year round, and you'll probably not have a revolution on your hands; but it is far more difficult to get away with that sort of thing when you're dealing with students who do not recognize the academic carrots and learn to respond to them.

So, with the establishment of comprehensive (all-ability) high schools, we found ourselves teaching, in the same school, children with an academic IQ, an academic performance around 150, alongside children with an academic IQ of something like 80. And it's clear that we've got to change, we've got to respond to the needs of this new situation.

The third significant factor, I think, is that--in general educational terms--is that we began to see changes in our assumptions about the ways in which children learn. This related to the greater recognition of the kinds of activities that children take pleasure and delight in, and invest energy and time in for themselves, by themselves, when not being interfered with by adults. The fourth significant factor was a closer, more informal kind of relationship between teacher and students with the teacher coming out from behind his desk and allowing the kids to come out of theirs. I think that it is peculiarly significant that the most calamitous drama lesson that I've ever seen was in fact in a comprehensive high school where a member of the English department, a part-time member of the English department, much against his own better judgement, was doing some drama, because he thought it was expected of him and he was sitting with his academic gown on, of all things--they still do this in some high schools--in the teacher's chair at the end of the room, telling the children to act: the sort of bloke who was afraid to take his coat off and get down on the floor with the kids and make a fool of himself. The fifth significant factor, I think, is changes in the prevailing assumptions about the goals and techniques of English teaching. There is a far greater recognition of the kinds of positive contributions the children themselves can make in the classroom and in the school as a total social environment, through such activities as writing, producing a school newspaper, a school magazine, exhibitions, various kinds of presentations--running the school and providing for the school a series of positive entertainments and meaningful activities for their own amusement and for the amusement of their fellow students.

To summarize then, very briefly, the five factors: the emergence of mime and of a mime pedagogy, of a theory of instruction or theory of technique or theory of aim and of ways of getting there; the confluence of academic and non-academic pupils; a clearer awareness of the ways in which kids really do learn; a less formal teacher-pupil relationship; and a recognition of the ability of the pupils to enrich and enhance the school environment.

Now in such a context of change, drama comes to be seen not so much as the transmission of a body of knowledge, but rather as an active process, a happening with its own distinctive disciplines and its own distinctive pleasures. It becomes less a matter of struggling more or less painfully through the strange language, the incomprehensible plot, and the opaque footnotes of a dreary school edition of A Midsummer Night's Dream and becomes more a matter of acting out feelings, attitudes, perceptions, insights, and of relating one with another.

Well, let me be specific and recall a few of the most satisfying lessons that I have experienced with kids in what would seem to me to be a fairly sort of average representative, unskilled, tentative, professionally unprepared situation. As a typical sort of graduate English teacher in a high school, what I had to do in effect was to go back to school--post-graduate training in England does not prepare one for work in drama with children. It's beginning to, now, but it hasn't traditionally, so what one had to do was learn on the job, with one's colleagues. We had a group of about half a dozen of us who were very dissatisfied with the drama that we were doing, and we wanted to learn new ways. We'd seen one or two films and we decided that we must learn. So we happened to be able to find a teacher in the locality who was prepared to do some work with us in the evening. So we learned on the job. We also learned not to be afraid to make fools of ourselves.

One of the classes that I was working with had realized intuitively that one of the essential components of drama is conflict. They didn't say as much in so many words, but whenever they were given the chance, their dramatic group improvisations moved in the direction of conflict. The girls in the class--11 and 12 year olds--were intensely interested in marriage and parenthood. One girl in particular in the class had a talent for fluent story-telling, so after a period of trial and error discussion, she came up with a quasi-medieval epic-story involving betrayal and the capture of a castle with the knight and his retainers struggling manfully to defend their womenfolk and children. The essential virtue of this story as a framework for improvisation was that it involved all the pupils of the class in a variety of roles according to their confidence and their degree of prior involvement. Having established the physical, spatial limits of the action, the realization of specific detail within the story was left to the pupils. And what we did was simply to allow any child who provided a telling moment in the action, to re-enact, once the action was over, the appropriate part so as to convey to others this particularly vivid detail. What I'd stress here is that in the heat of the action individuals were constantly making discoveries.

I'd say that one of the peculiar virtues of improvisations is that one is always making discoveries--pulling things out of their imaginations, responding to an immediate demand or challenge or provocation in ways that surprise themselves. I didn't believe, not until last year, that not only could this happen with 11 or 12-year olds; it could also happen with mature students. Last year I was very fortunate in getting Gabriel Barnfield, a local teacher in a high school, to come in and work with my post-graduate students; and within three hours of beginning their work in improvisation, they were discovering talents in themselves which had been lying dormant throughout high school and throughout the university and they were surprising themselves. Gabriel Barnfield has just published his book on his work in school, Creative Drama in Schools, published by MacMillan of London, and I suggested to Bob Hogan that NCTE might get hold of a job lot and make it available to teachers in America. It seems to me to be an invaluable document because it is the work of a real practicing teacher, not a theorist, but a man who is on the job seven days a week, who is working with academically disadvantaged, socially disadvantaged kids in a slum school with a minimum of props, the minimum of physical facilities, the minimum of professional encouragement, but he has two feet to stand on and he has done some incredible, unbelievable things. I talked again to my post-graduate students about the work Gabriel Barnfield was doing and they wouldn't believe me until they went to the school and saw the kids in action.

Gabriel, in his discussion of improvisation in his book, Creative Drama in Schools, suggests that the basic essentials of improvisation are fourfold. First a place in which a group of definite characters, unknown at first to one another, meet and interact without knowing or planning it. By knowing, I think he means having cues, instructions, or roles handed out beforehand in such a way that the action is merely performed in accordance with a detailed brief. It seems to me crucial to attend, in that sort of situation, to the degree of improvisation that one asks for or allows. It seems to me that this is always a matter of variability. With 11 or 12-year olds coming to drama for the first time after having had no drama in the elementary school, my policy in high school was to provide them with a broad framework, within which they could still enjoy a considerable degree of spontaneity and autonomy, that is, give them a broad framework of an action and allow them to work out in detail as it happened, as they responded to the moment, to the challenge, the provocation, the relationship of the moment. As they gained confidence in the clearly specified framework of a given situation, these props they want to rely on can be slowly withdrawn.

It's arguable, for example, whether acting out the Grendel episodes from Beowulf allows for more flexibility, a greater range of improvisation, more room for invention, than the episode of the valley of the dry bones from the Book of Ezekiel. My own experience is that the mysterious, bizarre situation in Ezekiel allows for a freer play of spontaneous extemporization than the fairly detailed narrative that Beowulf provides. The point I want to stress is this: It seems to me that the active engagement of the pupils' disciplined imagination depends on the nature of the teacher's telling and the crucial thing, I would have thought, is that the pupils should do their thing; that is, it should be their valley of the dry bones; it should be their Boewulf and their Grendel.

The peculiar virtue of Grendel, of course, is that it is externalizing the darkness inside; it is externalizing the violence inside; it is externalizing the sadism inside; and it's nice to be able to see these things outside in the world, not cooped up guiltily within one's own private world.

I'm sure that each of us has his own notion, his own peculiar notion, of what, for example, a resurrection feels like--what does it feel like to be resurrected? Well, when one does the valley of the dry bones, in my experience, there are as many notions of what the resurrection feels like as there are children in the group. Improvisation in this sense, it seems to me, seems to be a movement from private to public and in this sense it is communication. It is a means of sharing one's own sense of the world, one's own sense of reality, with others, and comparing with others' sense of reality. The imagining, the fantasy is made public, and once it's seen and shared by other pupils, the authenticity, the reality, the truth, the convincingness of an individual realization is something that can be assessed and discussed when the appropriate moment comes. And in such a context, the concentration and the absorbtion that make for fullness of realization, or completeness of realization--these things can be shared, and they can be learned. They can be observed and they can be extended and they can be refined and they can be rendered increasingly subtle, increasingly adequate, increasingly full.

The thing that staggered the kids last week, for example, when Dawn was capturing the butterfly, was the reality of that butterfly for Dawn. She did really believe in it and she had them sitting on the edge of their seats, because at one moment she convinced us that it was at the point of getting away, and then she came down and she held this butterfly in her hand so as not to break it and she gave it to another child and that child was so convinced of the reality of that butterfly that he accepted it gently and carefully; he didn't grab it; he took it as tenderly as Dawn had brought it. The moment was one of pure magic. I think perhaps the experience of this whole thing *is* incommunicable. It is incommunicable, but sometimes the reality is so intense that one could weep; one could cry; one could laugh; but I find that I am reduced to silence.

Let me recapitulate very briefly. The major concerns of working in improvisation, in drama, in England are to create a working style, a sense of committment to the activity which encourages invention and discovery, which respects the life-styles of any particular group or age range, that engages the pupils in a genuinely strenuous discipline, a discipline which is physical, intellectual, and imaginative and which, most important I think, offers immediate rewards. If one is teaching children with an IQ of about 80, they probably have just come out of a geography lesson which they have only half understood; they are probably going to a history lesson which they will only half understand, and they are kids which one can observe walking around the school campus as children who don't get any immediate rewards for most of their high school, and drama is in fact peculiarly virtuous in that it can give these children immediate rewards.

Underlying such a work is the assumption, which I consider to be valid, that the dramatic improvisations have much in common with the rest of one's work in what may be called specifically the English parts of the curriculum. If I have to characterize what would seem to me to be a successful lesson, that is, successful for the kids, I would say it was a time in which children had achieved a high level of absorbtion, a tremendous degree of self-forgetfulness, had attended intensely to both what they were doing and also to what others around them were doing, who adventured into the representation and the realization of fresh areas of experience, had taken emotional and intellectual delight from their work, and had ended--after forty-five minutes--fairly close to the pleasurable state of exhaustion that follows intense concentration.

I want now to sketch in very briefly some notion of sequence as it applies to dramatic improvisation in England, and then turn very briefly again to the English side of the coin. The more emphatically that we move away from this procrustean bed of the predigested, pre-stressed, prepackaged, textbook-dominated curriculum, the more surely we have to take note of our pupils as persons, and as changing persons--kids who change from day to day; kids who change from month and from year to year--the more sensitively we have to create some sequence of work which is both competently productive and relevant, and also characterized by a delicate balance between chaos and order. If you asked what I propose to do in drama tomorrow with, say, class 3X or grade 5, I have a fairly clear idea. If you ask me what I shall be doing in six month's time, I may well have a general notion, but I shall not necessarily commit myself in any way to specific detail. We don't know how it's going to go; we don't know how fast they are going to move; we don't know in which direction they are going to take it. So, a few general notions: I think the Brunerian spiral is quite a useful image for this sequence since one returns to particular activities, say, occupational mime, and particular stories or scenarios from time to time with increasing attempts at precision, control, sublety, and so on. Generally speaking, kids around age 11 ought to spend a lot of time on occupational mime and fairly relaxed, undemanding acting-out of stories or situations drawing on and sometimes modifying the children's own stereotypes of character and archetypal situations--villain, hero, good man, bad man, princess, and so on. Work in small groups, work with the whole class, work individually, plenty of variety and plenty of variation of role. So that the child works both as herself and as a role-playing stereotypic villain, or heroine, or whatever. Plenty of free, rumbustious movement, expansive movement, and also some fairly detailed movement, with or without music, alternating with the improvisation work, which often has a simple narrative framework so that they know where they are going, they know who they are, they know what they are about.

Around 12, normally with the transition from elementary to high school, a stepping up of the disciplines, of attention to detail, adequacy and clarity and fullness of realization; with the onset of puberty, an increasing emphasis on interaction between pairs or within groups, the tendency to include much less occupational mime, much more expressive mime, and an introduction to a sense of form, of shape in dramatic sequence, dramatic feeling, dramatic experience, a feeling for rhythm, climax, conclusion, anti-climax, suspense and so on. These considerations go on to feed into the work which is related to the regulation set plays, so at 15 the kids will be taking some examination, say, involving the study of Julius Caesar. What do we do? Do we stop everything that we've been hooked on, that the kids would be hooked on, and say, "Get back to the classroom, get your books out and look at the footnotes on page 1 of Julius Caesar"? The transition, I think, between improvisation and the study of a set text is one that many teachers find difficult. But it's one that they are learning more about; it's a subject on which a lot of people in England are swapping ideas and learning from each other. I think Gabriel Barnfield in his book deals very intelligently with this. But normally, if you are taking Julius Caesar, the study of the play will be preceded by improvisation of moments involving secrecy, anxiety, mass hysteria, anger, indignation, particular moments in relationships which are analogous to those they will find in the play, so when they come to the play they will recognize, they will feel, what the dramatic reality of the play is: they will recognize it, at least in part, from the inside.

[At this point, Mr. Summerfield put on a tape recording of a reading of "Jabberwocky," with music and sound effects, done by 12-year-old students of his. He then showed, on slides, a number of poems notable for their ambiguity both of form and language. He explained how he used projections of such poems to involve students creatively in the oral interpretation of literature; and he emphasized that, from a pedagogical point of view, the essential virtue of such stimuli was that there never arose the question of whether a reading was "right" or "wrong."

Summerfield's presentation served to demonstrate some very concrete relationships between improvisational techniques and literature, and--perhaps even more valuably--it served to clear the air of the impression that improvisation was some sort of hieratical mystery to all of its proponents.]

[Following a short break, Mr. Gevanthor again took over and involved the participants in an exercise Miss Spolin refers to as "the random walk." Coached by the director, each participant finds his own route around the room, moving among the other participants without regarding them, a sort of Brownian motion with human particles. From the side, Gevanthor suggested the sensations the participants were feeling, the sensations they should be aware of, the terrain they were moving over, the atmosphere they were moving through. After a while, Gevanthor turned the coaching over to a volunteer, Mrs. Peggy Reichman, a young teacher, so as to demonstrate that the side-coaching techniques were learnable and usuable by a teacher relatively inexperienced in drama. The following exchange came at the end of the exercise.]

NORMAN GEVANTHOR: One of the things that teachers have difficulty in learning is to teach a class without imposing a point of view and allow the child to come out himself. In order to play these games I think it is very important to keep working at that like an athlete keeps working at it. It's not a thing that you say you know how to do and stay away from it. For Viola, she's 20 years in it, and she can give a concert anytime. But for us who are just beginning we have to constantly think about it and work at staying out of their way when you're using words and directing.

And I've been in the schools, ladies and gentlemen, for a year and a half, five days a week, doing this, working with teachers and with five actors who have their problems also. I've been there and we've had reports and testimonies from teachers and principals who said it was great and things look great, and it's wonderful, and they would scream and they wrote papers to the board of education, and they said "we must have it," and you know what's there now? There's two television sets in every room. That's what replaced it because this is not yet, they're not sure about it, but they're sure about two television sets. That's why I get the feeling to go back in the theatre, lock the doors, take your actors and stay--I don't want to come out here!

BRIAN HANSEN: I would just make one comment. I think that you've visited the schools but you ain't been there unless you've been a teacher and worked with them. That's a different experience.

NORMAN GEVANTHOR: I'm sure it is. I've seen the atmosphere enough to see the teachers' faces, to see their complexions, to see how they feel when a supervisor walks in the room while the games are going on. "Help. Would you please take over?" Or even if they try to play a game when the supervisor is there, their concentration is on them.

When the college of education sends down observers to see whether I am teaching drama that is exciting in the classroom, and there are six of them sitting around, and the kids are looking around and saying, "Who's that?" So my class goes on. I don't care if I'm a superhuman man, my concentration is on those six people there. Shall I have a happy class and show that the energy is always got to be up all the time, or shall I stay with the process, and that class happens to be in a two-month period where the kids need to observe, at a point where we are working on evaluation of imaginary objects, and the energy is not always up in the air, so they leave, and they come back and they say, "The kids looked bored," or something like that, and I have to say, "Maybe they were, but they were still thinking." We have our problems also.

ALAN ENGELSMAN: I want to comment on your sense of the teacher's sensitivity to the supervisor coming in, your own sensitivity to it. What you're saying though is the same thing Viola was saying, "They've got to come in, you've got to invite them in, the only way anything is going to happen is their coming in." The only thing you can ask them to do is to come for four days in a row, which we haven't been able to do yet. If we get them in for a sustained time, then you are sure enough of yourself to know that what is going to happen may not happen on the first day, it may not happen on the second day, but if they're there long enough, you know you're going to make your point. My feeling is that if we have anything to say to supervisors, we have to say that they can't get it from a momentary dropping into the class for five minutes.

[*Three prominent English educators had been invited to be the final speakers at the symposium. They were asked to summarize the proceedings and to give their impressions of what seemed to have been established during the symposium about the relationships between improvisation and literature teaching in the schools. Professor Cresap Watson spoke first, from the point of view of one whose responsibilities involve preparing English teachers for the schools.*]

CRESAP WATSON: I think I am supposed to be a kind of devil's advocate representing the teacher training establishment, though there are people better qualified to do that, since I am an unorthodox member of our college of education. Speaking as someone who has to teach future English teachers and supervise their student teaching days, I think this is great. But for God's sake, let's not turn this over to the colleges involved in teacher training. It would be the death of the whole spirit and art of improvisation, whether it was the liberal arts faculty or the college of education faculty. It'll take one important thing out, the spirit of play, the game spirit. We will have required methods courses, professors of improvisation. I'm not even sure it ought to be in the undergraduate training. Probably a teacher won't realize how valuable it can be until he's had at least a year of experience. Colleges are not the place for the transmitting of the art of improvisation, or the techniques of it, to teachers. Maybe a theatre is the place or an actual teacher's classroom, with someone from outside the educational establishment.

It seems to me that this may be the bridge or tool that English teachers have been groping for for a long time. It helps us show students the interaction, the relationship between literature and life. Even though we have textbooks that are called this, they don't do a very good job. I think this is a problem that teachers have had trying to to teach literature as a sort of connection between art and reality. The great thing about improvisation to me, a truly uninitiated person, is that it brings energy, participation, excitement, involvement back into the classroom. Another great thing, it's going to discourage the mental and psychological rigidity and overstructuring that English teachers, at least, seem to have, that contaminates their whole life style and their whole classroom posture, and which is a side benefit which you people in the theatre have not anticipated. It adds an element that we talked about the first day, that school is a drag, we don't blame them for dropping out, really. Improvisation brings the spirit of play and games back in, which has been missing since the primary grades, if it's even there at that stage.

I think I could sum it up as a teacher and say improvisation is too useful to be trusted to theatre people and too exciting to be trusted to educators.

BOB ALEXANDER: What do you think about someone like myself teaching this in a teacher's college, which is a structured thing, but my being an outside source, and making it a compulsory part of a teacher's education, so that before a teacher gets into the system, he enters into the system with a new kind of attitude toward teaching rather with an old one that then has to be changed?

CRESAP WATSON: I think the whole monolithic thing would destroy what you're doing.

BOB ALEXANDER: There aren't any teachers' colleges or universities that would be excited about this idea?

CRESAP WATSON: Yes, there are some.

JUNIUS EDDY: Do all good things have to happen to teachers after they get out? Right after they are bad and untrained and not working well? Does it all have to be retraining?

CRESAP WATSON: I think they tune out while we're training them, thank God, so we don't do a whole lot of damage. This thing is too good to just slip in to the typical teacher training curriculum. I think it would get buried, swamped, ignored. I realize I am oversimplifying here--there would be some schools, some individuals....

I think, maybe because of the nature of it, the typical college classroom is the wrong place. Maybe if you could take these student teachers off-campus--take them to a theatre....

WALLY SMITH: There are theatre groups in colleges all over the country who are doing that. Right now.

CRESAP WATSON: But they have no traffic with other departments.

WALLY SMITH: That's true. Sometimes they wanted to have traffic, but the traffic wouldn't go through.

VIOLA SPOLIN: Are you suggesting that theatre games and improvisation might become another profession?

CRESAP WATSON: I'd hate to see it get that structured.

We've been talking about authoritarianism, passivity, an awful lot of passive listening. Some of the advocates, the evangelists of this thing, have sounded a little authoritarian every now and then, so that I can see dangers in overstructuring, of what can happen once you sell a school system; you're going to have superintendent's bulletins on how to conduct improvisation in classrooms, how to do it, at what hour, and in what subjects.

PETER GABB: I've had my hand up since 10:00 this morning. I don't have anything theoretical or intellectual to say. I was in the workshops and I want to speak to those who have a caution about trying this. I've had problems. I'm a slow learner in trying to use the techniques. I have found in places where it's successful, it's been so good that I would be a horse's tail not to keep trying to work at it. It's not something where you walk into a class and all of a sudden you try this thing that somebody tried and this miracle happens. Sometimes it's so frustrating, because you have all these pressures--you want to work in the system, you want to have standards as an English teacher, you've got to have notebooks, you've got to have book reports, and you have to give out grades, and correct papers, and you're so fatigued with all this stuff--who's got time to think of all these nice things to do in the classroom? So you do the best you can with it, you think you've got something good rigged up, and you think you know that the kids are thinking, and that's the first big mistake, because--"Here's a chance for you to get out of your seats, everybody, and say what you think"--now you get these kids up there and you're lucky enough to hit on something they're interested in, and you've got two furiously debating against each other; it's almost violent. You think surely this is exciting, and you see three stags sitting in the back of the room, cutting up and telling jokes. You say, "How can you not be interested?" Or, after a very interesting session working with a play, we get back to the classroom, and you see as plain as the nose on your face what they've learned by experience, and somebody gets up and says, "What did we do all this for?" "What did we learn?" I mean, you could just kill 'em!

Sometimes you do things and they see it and they find it all interesting and maybe you break down and just tell them what they learned and they can't help but agree. There are a lot of advantages to it. Going back to what Watson said, I wouldn't institutionalize this as a compulsory teacher education course because they do have a way of formalizing and bureaucratizing the thing so that it would destroy it. I don't know why you couldn't handle a workshop on the college campus, and of course make it an elective, strictly voluntary for anybody that wants to do progressive things. It can't be forced on anybody.

CRESAP WATSON: The problem here is that the teachers here are all swingers, and they like it. But the ones that ought to be exposed to it are the ones that are not going to come to a voluntary workshop.

PETER GABB: You were talking about natural instinct and impulses--I have this very strong one about self-preservation. I don't want to get fired, so I compromise the thing in a way and do what I can with it so I can relate to society and the school system and not be destroyed, or else I won't be there at all to try anything or change anything.

SHIRLEY TRUSTY: I think that the topic of teacher training in improvisation is a topic worthy of, perhaps, a whole conference in itself, and I would like to see another conference developed around it.

FATHER WILHELMY: I'd like to introduce two men. Dr. Robert Hogan, Executive Secretary, National Council of Teachers of English and Floyd Rinker, Executive Director of the Commission on English.

ROBERT HOGAN: I was asked to comment on what I think to be the relevance of improvisation to the teaching of literature. I would like to start first with the bigger questions of its relevance to the teaching of English, and why we teach English, and what language has to do with it. Now, let's pick up that question of language briefly and then I'll drop it. I'd say that if our goal in teaching language is linguistic purity and etiquette, that there is no connection between it and improvisation. But if our goal in teaching is to teach so that the kids will have confidence in their power over language, then I would trust the kids that went through a course in improvisation far more than kids who went to a conventional grammar class. So if that's one of our goals in teaching, teaching so that they'll come out at the far end with power over language and confidence in their use of language, then I would vote for the system that we're talking about.

In our simplistic way we split the English curriculum for years into two camps of learning theory. We held that the cognitive people like Bruner really had our key to the teaching of literature--that's what literature is all about. And we're willing to assign language instruction to the behaviorists or to anybody else who thought that he might train kids to discern the distinction between who and whom or shall and will or something like that. If you look at the two kinds of textbooks, the dominance of the behaviorists in the grammar book is perfectly clear, and the commitment to the cognitive people in the literature books is equally clear. But over the last two or three years there has been a kind of third concern, a non-Freudian interest in the emotional experience and its impact in changing behavior, and therefore its impact as an educative experience. I think if one looks at literature books in particular, he will see a heightened concern about emotional experience as an integral part of learning. And I think that's the relevance. And that's what I'll get to. Let me read you a poem which I think no conventional English teacher would ever teach. I'll give you the reasons he or she would give you for not teaching it. And then I'll come to the real reason for not teaching it. The poem's called "I Never Saw Another Butterfly:"

> The last, the very last,
> So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
> Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
> Against a white stone . . .
>
> Such, such a yellow
> Is carried lightly 'way up high
> It went away I'm sure because it wished to kiss the world goodbye.
> For seven weeks I've lived in here,
> Penned up inside this ghetto
> But I have found my people here.
> The dandelions call to me
> And the white chestnut candles in the court,
> Only I never saw another butterfly.
>
> That butterfly was the last one.
> Butterflies don't live in here,
> In the ghetto.

I think the reasons that teachers would give you for not teaching that poem are these. First of all, it has a pretty bad line in it. I think that it's a bad line, "It went away, I'm sure, because it wanted to kiss the world goodbye." And if we teach that kind of thing, they might end up reproducing it. That's one reason for not teaching it. Second, if you want to teach butterfly poems, the romantics in ample good measure have written much better butterfly poems than this one. So two good reasons. A third reason is that it's a child's work, and our only response to children's work is, one, to tell them how it could have been improved, and second, to grade them on it. But the real reason that we wouldn't teach the poem is because of the context in which it occurred, and you can't, even if you're a New Critic avoid that or ignore it. It refers in here to a ghetto, and that wasn't Watts, and it wasn't Harlem, and it wasn't the South Side of Chicago; it was Warsaw, and the poem wasn't really written in the ghetto; it was written in Auschwitz by a child who knew that she was to be gassed and then burned in about two weeks. She never saw another butterfly. And I think that's the reason they wouldn't teach it, because I don't think we know how to contend with that degree of emotion in an English class.

At the party last night we all demonstrated an unwritten law of this culture, and that's if two men are going to talk face to face, they can't get any closer than arm's distance. And as we couldn't keep that distance at Shirley's party last night, some of us cornered ourselves in the refrigerator, or in the corridor where we stood shoulder to shoulder, not face to face. We have to stay at arm's length, otherwise we're uncomfortable. And I think the same thing has underscored our teaching of literature; we want to keep at arm's distance from it. At that distance we're safe enough to feel comfortable in our treatment of it. And so as I was flipping open a brand new American-whipped textbook, the outcome of a four-year curriculum project involving lots and lots of people, I opened the book at random and read and what should be there on the page but "To a Waterfowl." A nice, safe, William Cullen Bryant. The problem, I don't think, is technique. We keep saying "We haven't been trained to do this," "We don't know how to do this." That's the same response I used to get when I used to think that teaching spelling was possible and good. And you put the spelling list on the board, and they rebelled because they didn't know how to spell those words. We offer as an explanation the description of the problem. Of course we don't know how to do it. But that explains the problem, but it doesn't explain why we don't have to do it or why we shouldn't be expected to do it. Why do we teach literature? Partly I think, to keep alive the cultural heritage that some people think is important, but also, I think, to educate the imagination. That's the same business I think that we're all in. So that as a consequence of our teaching, children will be able to imagine what it's like to be more and more and more people, other than just themselves. And if that's why we teach literature, the relevance it seems to me is partly that the improvisation that we're talking about has a way of hooking life to literature and literature to life. I think we have to give it that credit. Second, and my only testimony for this statement is the children we interviewed in Great Britain, the sixth form kids, who were so busy preparing for examination that they didn't have time any longer for drama in the curriculum, and the regret that they expressed at not having time any more to keep up the improvised drama. We asked them, "What was it beyond fun?" (as if it had to be anything beyond fun) and independently, school after school, we found that this kind of experience is what it was that led them to respond to literature, and that they were able therefore, to imagine what it was like to be the people in the book. It was almost as if, going back to Bob Alexander's description of the actor, they were allowed to do all the things an actor does without needing the validation of an audience; they were their own audiences. Nobody outside telling them that they were responding. I would simply argue that it enabled them to respond much more deeply to literature. It's this approach, among others, that will get rid of that armed resistance between the child and the book or, above all, teacher and the book. It seems to me it calls for workshops for teachers. It also calls for workshops for supervisors. Industry learned years ago that you never give to junior executives a training course that they don't telescope for senior executives. Otherwise the senior executives won't let it happen. It's comparable in the schools. You can talk to teachers all you like, but until you get the supervisors convinced, nothing will change in the school. But if we say that there aren't enough teachers--another kind of argument against change--"We can't fill all the English classes with teachers who know how to do this." A lot of elementary classes can't fill all the elementary classes with teachers who know how to teach music, but that doesn't mean the schools don't teach music; it simply means that they organize a bell schedule so that the few teachers who do teach music come into contact with all the children. We saw one school in England where the best teacher of mime and movement was the girls' P. E. teacher. She just happened to be. So the English department was perfectly willing to turn the children over in waves for a period of a week so that they could learn mime and movement and count it as part of the English program even though the P.E. teacher was teaching it. That calls for a reorganization of bell schedules, but it also calls for something I think may be tougher--a reorganization of our definition of our subject. But if we can redefine it so that it makes sense that a girls' P.E. teacher can come in one period a week to teach mime and movement, I think that's way over half the battle. The administrators beyond that I think would be fairly easy to cope with. I think it's too easy to agree with Bob Alexander when he's overstating a case deliberately to underscore the urgency of it; that is, it's too easy to say it's too late when they're 13. If once we say that, then once again we can say that's the job of the elementary school, and we can go back to being the good solid disciplinarian that we were meant to be. I think of the story of the man lost out in the country, who couldn't find his way back to the village, found a farmer and asked the farmer if he knew how to get to the village. And the farmer says, "Yeah, but I sure as hell wouldn't start from here." I'm sorry, but "here" is where we are. All of us frozen adults and adolescents becoming rigid and a promising group of young people who we'd like to keep flexible, but I'm afraid we've got to get there from here.

FLOYD RINKER: Since Cresap made reference to an evangelist, I must confess that several times yesterday and today I have remembered a story about Bishop Sheen's audience with the Pope. After forty minutes of prayerful entreaty, Bishop Sheen stopped talking and the Pope protested, "But Bishop, I am already a Catholic." You'll forgive me for saying that Bob Alexander there has made too heavy an effort at conversion. You did this with me--perhaps I caution you not to use the same approach if you would seek cooperation or if you were trying to help this crummy English teacher that Robert has described. I get caught so often with the eiplogue or postscript or benediction. Forbes' Magazine last week ran a story about a student talking to his faculty advisor. Everything was wrong in the institution. There would be a revolution. Many programs would topple. People would suffer. There would be blood. Even worse, you may be killed in this. "But we have to have complete change." The faculty advisor said, "I'm sure you're right. I agree with you. But now let's get down to our immediate problem. What courses are you going to take next term?" and the student replied, "I don't know. I'm going to see my mother this weekend, and I will tell you on Monday."

Now. The idea of improvisation is not exactly new. A great many, if not all, of the world's billions have been engaged in a variety of improvisations since infancy, whether as an only child or as one of many siblings. However, what you have developed are techniques that work, and if I believe you, produce beneficial results, practices that undoubtedly will be more widely deployed as more people will hear about them and understand them. By your own work and by showing others, instruction in our schools can be improved and possibly the schools will become a lesser loss in the growth of the individual. You have an answer. I doubt that the answer exists, or if it does, can be readily determined. As for myself, though I have enjoyed my two days here, and assure you that I have slept less than at any workshop or conference in the last ten years, the only messianic hope I am willing to give my full hard support to is the freedom of individual from home and state, from church and school, whenever the individual wants to believe nothing or do nothing outside himself. I'll take you to Lucerne and to a picture that I saw forty or fifty years ago. It is of a boy sitting in a window of a very palatial home, looking out on the mountains. No governess or tutor is near, no toys, no books. There is nothing to engage the boy except what he himself creates, thinks, or wants to do. I think that this picture is the only valuable course in methodology to which I have ever been exposed. One thing was quite apparent, and that was that this boy had security, and security, I am convinced is what children want more than anything else. Love is not as important as we often declare. I think that through this practice, this technique, we may find ways to free the individual more, or we may provide some of the security that so often is lacking in the home or in the schools.

I think that some of the people here may have a warped notion of the English teacher in the secondary school. Certainly he may be ill-trained, noncreative, dull, inefficient. I often think so. But the English teacher has been receptive to others' ideas. He has been quite ready to employ new practices. When the scientists after World War II discovered media and TV and through the physics program were going to revolutionize the schools, no one spoke up and said, "But English teachers have been experimenting with media for several decades." He is quite ready to employ new practices, and I think he is ever hopeful of finding some cure for some of his problems. The English teacher in the secondary school in this country will listen and he will try. Fortunately, he will also jettison what does not work. Fortunately, also, he doesn't discard what has been working solely because he's enarmoured of the irrepresible new. I would suggest that if you are going to involve the secondary school English teacher and not work solely separate from him, that you meet him where he is. Like God, some of us want to do our loving at a judicious distance. I think that way about you and the program you espouse. I can think of many creative works that came from individuals living on their own clouds, the people that hated any jostling in the streets. Is it really too bad to be alone in a crowd? I heard someone muttering something about Emily Dickinson earlier in the day and I think--well, I'm sort of glad she wasn't disturbed. Much of our teaching of literature is bad. We admit that. We do need to know more, to try different approaches and to learn new ways. Even more we need to know how to remove ourselves from center stage. Certainly, successful employment of improvisation may be a good way to get a teacher on the sidelines where he will serve as a catalyst, not be an intermediary, not work as an interpreter standing between the boy and the book. If you have a way of helping us do this, you will help in the improvement of the teaching of English in the schools. English teachers hope that their students will have something to say, but as someone remarked, class load and the tyranny of time cannot be wholly separated from the results we strive to get. We've had in the last fifty years several romps with participation, times when it was the vogue for all recitations to be praised. Even if a boy said, "Hell with the moon," that's good because he was taking part in the class; he was involved. But somehow or other we soon lose our zest if neither sequential or consequential thought is behind the participation. Likewise, in English classes we know that we have to have something to say before we can write. Blackboards, overhead projectors, and tape are quite widely used in this country in making the written composition assignment. Discussion, sample beginnings and closings, determination of focus, and many other means are daily tried out and work. Actual writing of the composition in many instances happens only after several days of preparation. I suppose that this might be considered dated. Now I am reminded that teachers were reading aloud and using victrolas, radio, and film for many years before they were asked to take courses in audio-visual education. I suppose we didn't know what we were doing until the term was discovered. Give us something more than discovery as another term.

FATHER WILHELMY: Before I turn this over to Jim to make some final remarks, and to Shirley, I would just like to say that as I leave here I am happy and at the same time tense. I'm happy because somehow or another my world impinged upon your world, yet I really don't know you that well and that is what makes me tense; we did not get a chance, we did not get the time to know one another that well. It would have been wonderful, I presume with some hesitation, if we could have spent a few months together.... I am tense for another reason; it seems that in the amount of time we have been here so much has been jammed into our minds and into our whole personalities that we go home with a lot of uncertainty.... I must arrange the material some way or another so that I can use it, but I am not sure how to arrange it yet. They tell me that art has something to do with selectivity and arrangement. I will just have to wait for the artist to come alive in me before I can select and arrange a great deal of the material given us here. Finally, I would like to say that this has been--and I think I speak for everyone--and exhilirating experience for me. At times we got into small conflicts which were very good; at other times it seemed like some of us were vaccinated with phonograph needles or that we turned a suggestion into a type of filibuster, but--we are all teachers and teachers are constantly accused of having these faults. In summary, I have a quotation from a talk given by Carl Rogers. In 1963 in Dallas, Texas. The words of Carl Rogers sum up my own feelings about this experience in New Orleans; his words seem to say what I want to say:

> I have no desire to tell you what you should feel, think, or do. Consequently, I find myself to be in a real dilemma when I face a group like this. What can I do? The only solution I have come up with is perhaps I can share something of myself, something of my experience, something of what it has been like to be me in communication with others or with you. This is not an easy thing to do, but if I can do it--if I can share something of myself, then I think you can take what I say or leave it. You can decide whether it's relevant to your own jobs, your own careers, your own professions, or your own life. You can respond to it with the reaction, "That's just what I felt, what I have experienced." or equal with an evaluation, "My experience has taught me something entirely different." In either case, it may help you to define yourself more clearly. more openly, or more surely. That I do regard as something worthwhile and as something I hope we have conveyed, and I hope that we are going home to share with one another at home a somewhat miscellaneous bag of learning satisfactions and dissatisfactions that we have had here, things that we have learned, or are in the process of learning about this mysterious business of relating with other human beings...

via improvisation and the teaching of literature. Thank you very much.

JIM HOETKER: I am much less given to pleasant sentiments than the good father is, but I think there are two very strong pieces of behavioral evidence that something happened here. Floyd says he slept very little, and I don't know when I've kept my mouth shut for so long. After we get all this in print and let people tell us what they meant to say, maybe we'll really know what we've got and where we can go with it. I, myself, have been too involved in what was being said to be a critical onlooker and to evaluate what's going on. I really have no idea how this all turned out. I wish we could keep you together for another week. Peter, you weren't the only one who's had his hand up since 10:00 a.m.

SHIRLEY TRUSTY: My task is a very happy one and will be very brief. And it's simply to say thank you for bringing your resources and your talents and for sharing this confrontation with us. I do trust the method of improvisation, and I sincerely hope that this symposium has been a beginning for continued recognition and development of improvisation in the teaching of English. I think it is significant that it has been held with such a wealth of talent that has responded so eagerly and so willingly to participation. I'm not much of an expert in the planning of conferences, but I did find it curious and stimulating that people somehow have found out about this symposium and that we've had to turn people away even before it began.